









AYSTATION 3







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EDITOR'S LETTER



"...we're home to one of the few people in the world to have finished both GTAIV and MGS4."

his was a month like no other. Not only do we have the first review of *Grand Theft Auto IV*, we've got exclusive looks at everything else you could possibly imagine. We've spent countless hours jammed into economy class seats, flown to three continents – all in the search of the best possible content for *OPS*. *Metal Gear Solid 4? MotorStorm 2? Soulcalibur IV? Red Faction 3?* We've got 'em all in what's possibly the heftiest issue of *OPS* yet. In fact, right now we're home to one of the few people in the world who has finished both *GTAIV* and *Metal Gear Solid 4*. Talk to Mark Serrels, the lucky bastard. Yep, we're on the frontlines people.

Unfortunately, I have bad news. For me, mostly – things here will continue to go from strength to strength. 2008 is going to be an absolutely gangbusting year for the PS3, and I can't wait to see how it pans out – but after four years on *OPS2* and *OPS* I'm moving on from the wonderful world of PlayStation. It's been a wild ride, thanks for reading and I'll see you online. I'll be playing *Rock Band* for, say, the next year or so. Cheers.

LUKE REILLY, Acting Editor



PS3 online: Capt_Flashheart

"What if I say I'm not like the others?" - Dave Grohl

How many sick days for GTAIV?

MARK SERRELS

Erm, none. (Looks nervously around the office) Being a model employee (wipes sweat from forehead) I will endeavour to come to work everyday. But if I come down with a bizarre case of leprosy, so be it.

Online: Serrels



PHILLIP JORGE

Argh!!!! I took all my allocated sick days in the first frickin' month. It seemed like a good idea at the time, and I had just got COD4. Time to bring in my evil twin 'Phillipe' to cover for my lazy ass.

Online: Phil Lino



ADAM MATHEW

How many days will I take off to play *GTAIV*? Why exactly are we measuring this in days? Months would make way more sense. By the time I'm done with this bad boy I'll have a ZZ Top beard, for sure.

Online: YourmumsAWESOME



SQUEEGEE SANTILLIAN

Honestly, I'm banking on none of these guys having too many days off, primarily so they bring the damn thing into the office so I can see what all the fuss is about. How about that, huh? Don't be selfish guys!



JAMES ELLIS

None. I'm worried the economy will slow down due to all the *GTA*-related sickies and we'll plunge into the second Great Depression. I'm doing something more reasonable and am dumping my girlfriend.

Online: gtfaster49



DAVE KOZICKI

Three solid weeks should do it. I have a bunker set up for such an occasion. Recliners, a fridge full of beer, a massive supply of junk food, and most importantly, no phone line in or out!

Online: ko-zee-ii



PlayStation®

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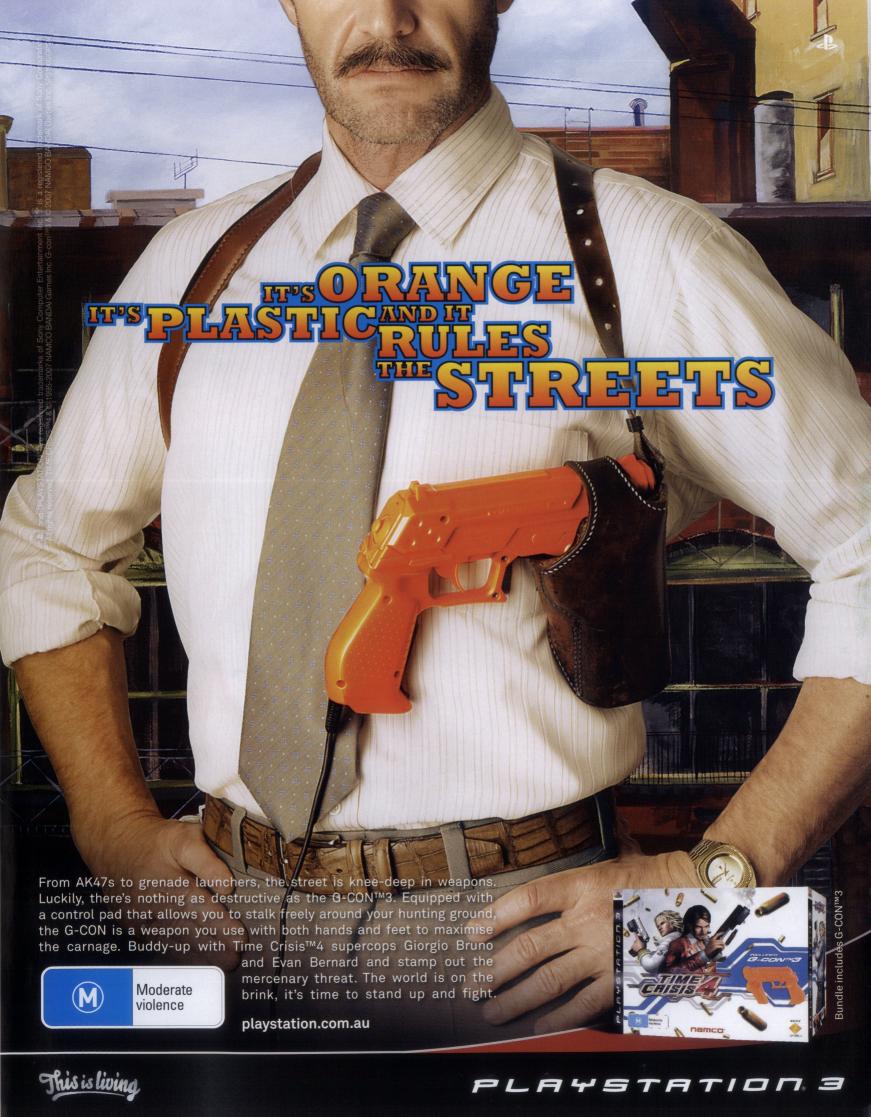
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SHOUT OUTS: Heizy, look efter yersel' wumman! :: Leigh and everyone at Rockstar :: Chad Acers :: GASPANIC :: THQ, mini-burgers and the Elephant & Castle :: Hideo Kojima's lair :: Rock Band :: www.edesign101.com.au :: Happy Birthday Camille!



SCREENSHOT OF THE MONT YOU JUST GOT SERVED... Punching people in the gut, and watching as they fly through the air helplessly, promises to be a huge highlight in Prototype. But take note of the fact that the military are hunting down Alex Mercer - this seems to be a huge indicator regarding the possible path of the game's storyline. If Alex Mercer isn't a failed military experiment out to take revenge, we'll eat out figurative hat. **GET TO THE (INSERT VEHICLE)** The demo we were shown had Alex Mercer partaking in the odd insanely huge jump onto various types of vehicles. By far the most spectacular, however, was the leap onto the helicopter, which finished up with Alex smashing the window before taking control of the thing! ■ Mmmm... spikey ■ He's going to punch a tank —a frickin tank yall!

BOOM SHAK-A-LAKA...

At any single moment that flesh and bone fist could transform into a solid, jaggy, instantly fatal jaggy weapon of DEATH! The sheer power of Alex Mercer is *Prototype*'s main selling point. What we want to know, however, is if there are any enemies within the game world that can stand up to him?

THIS GUY...

Hmm, is this guy aiming the wrong way because of dodgy AI, or is he aiming at something else completely? We may be speculating for nothing here, but could protagonist Alex Mercer have someone backing him up – someone with similar powers? It's possible.

Prototype: This is a game that continues to impress the hell out of us. Taking the saturated open world genre and injecting it with some insanely gory special powers, Prototype could be one of this year's major highlights...

Gaming's latest and greatest...

BUZZ

Best Christmas ever, Sonic gets Unleashed, new Call of Duty maps, new Guitar Hero tracks, and much, much more...



BEST CHRISTMAS EVER?!

sony lines up the big guns...

ep, we know what you're thinking: it's only bloody June and they're already talking about Christmas! Well, yes. You may have a point there, but with Sony starting to announce some semi-concrete release dates, holiday season 2008 is looking set to blast last year's seemingly stellar line up into oblivion.

Recently unearthed Sony release schedules have shown that big gun exclusives LittleBigPlanet and Killzone 2 will be making their way to stores around the end of September and the beginning of October, chased by the recently unveiled monstrosity that is Resistance 2.

That's not even mentioning *MotorStorm 2*, a game we can reportedly expect sometimes towards the end of the year, or any other exclusives that Sony might have up its sleeves for the coming year.

Everyone, from developers to gamers themselves seem to be predicting that 2008 will be the year of the PS3. Sony seems intent on delivering on that promise.



PHOENIX FROM THE FLAMES

Speaking of big reveals, SEGA hasn't confirmed, (but has barely denied) the existence of a new Sonic the Hedgehog game, Sonic Unleashed, but screens and gameplay footage of an all-new title starring the spikey one have leaked onto the internet.

The chances of this being the latest Sonic title are extremely high, and despite the fact that his previous outing was a maggot-infested hot mess, we can't help but feel a twinge of excitement, a miniscule hope that maybe this time, Sonic can pull it out the bag for one last grand adventure. Maybe...



IN THIS ENDLESS... TROPICAL PARADISE?

Roughly about a day after the last magazine went to print, we got a little surprise in the mail – a surprise you too will be able to check out if you make your merry way to the PlayStation Store and click 'download'.

We're talking, of course, about the big reveal of *MotorStorm 2* – a reveal that we partially reported on last month, and it turns out that the rumours were right on the money. *MotorStorm 2* IS set on a tropical island (apparently mostly inspired by Hawaii) this time round, and does feature interactive vegetation of the lush variety.

Also present and correct is a 16-player online component, four-player splitscreen and a new vehicle class – monster trucks! Check out our exclusive interview with producer Paul Hollywood on page 44.

IT IS YOUR DUTY... To download these new maps

Call of Duty 4 is currently a marauding war machine, striking fear and terror into the hearts of every other competing online shooter. On the PS3 it's far and away the most played title on the PlayStation Network, and has even managed to topple the 360 totem pole Halo 3. Ooh, burn.

In a quest to make their victory absolute, Infinity Ward has currently been hard at work on four new maps for your fragging pleasure, First up is Broadcast, a map expanding upon the section in single player where you assault the TV station in search of Al-Asad. This map retains the basic structure of the campaign level, with some addition features and new sections.

Another map, Creek, is an entirely new creation, set outside any of the campaign scenarios. As far as we can tell Creek is one of the largest maps yet seen in COD4, yet features plenty of cover for those afraid of those

pesky camping snipers...

Details on the other two maps are scant, but one titled Chinatown we assume is set in... Chinatown (?!) and the other titled Killhouse is apparently very similar to the training level at the beginning of the campaign ("SHOOT THE TAAHGETS!").

We await this upcoming map pack with much salivation.











Baja is the latest contender to the MotorStorm crown of off-road awesome, entering into a crowded market with the upcoming MotorStorm 2 and the impressive looking Pure on the release schedule for 2008.

In its favour however is it's awesome name (sounding bizarrely like some sort of Bollywood musical) and the fact that it's based on the Baja 1000, a huge off-road endurance race set in Mexico. In much the same way as Motorstorm, this race features ATV's, motorcycles, buggies, and all manner of vehicles.

At this stage Baja looks like it'll have hard work competing against the competition, but we have high hopes that the game exploits its subject matter expertly to create a more unique driving experience.



WHAT'S HOT AND WHAT'S NOT...

GTAIV Read the review to find out why!

Island Paradises We're going to drive the crap out of them.

Everybody's Golf Why are the girls sexually attractive?

Ye've got a lot of explaining to do.

Your new game better not suck balls.

Movie adaptations Do us a favour? Leave and never come back!

Games after GTA You've got a tough act to follow, people...













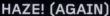


HOT!

NOT!

BUZZ

Prodding you in the ribs with all the latest newsbites...



Pinning down a release date has become so vague, and kinda pointless that it's almost like the butt of some random running joke. First it was December, then it was January, then it was early 2008, then it was Autumn...

etc. Not only that, but we recently had a May 22 release date unveiled only to have the rug pulled from under again. Now we're back to the vague date of 'May'. Hurry up already!



Those pesky Japanese are at it again, with the getting of stuff we don't have yet. What's the deal!? This time round the injustice comes in the form of the original Metal Gear Solid on the PlayStation Network. As of now the release is

for Japan only, but considering the popularity of the series and the game itself, we'd say it's only a matter of time before we get our grubby virtual mitts on this one..



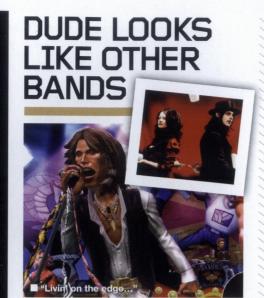
Ninja Theory, the team behind the almighty Heavenly Sword, is apparently gearing up to start production on its next title. That's the good news. The 'bad' news is that this new title will be going multi platform. Not too much is known about this new title,

but studio co-founder (and all-round lovely lady) Nina Kristenson has said that the game will be "a triple-A blockbuster - a game that focuses on our core strengths of story-telling, cinematics and combat.

OOH! VAGUE NEWS!

This is quite possibly the most vague news story ever written, but rumours abound that in addition to Sony's stellar Christmas line-up, there is yet another blockbuster game in the works that Sony is fixin' to

unveil at this year's upcoming E3. We have a couple of suspicions - one of which is that it could be the game we discussed last month: the title that is supposedly going to revolutionise what "consoles are capable of in terms of story-telling..." While you're at it, how about letting us know what the hell happened to Eight Days and The Getaway, huh?



Guitar Hero: Aerosmith, nice idea... interesting prospect. But what if you don't like Aerosmith? What if the bulbous lips of Steve Tyler induce vomit and rage? What if you do want to miss a thing?

It's an interesting question, and one answered with the fact that there are whole heap of other bands featured in the latest entry of Guitar Hero, ranging from bands both post- and pre-Aerosmith.

We already know about The Kinks' and Mott the Hoople's entries into the song list, but we recently got word that Lenny Kravitz, Deep Purple, and (hurray!) The White Stripes will all be making an appearance in Guitar Hero: Aerosmith.

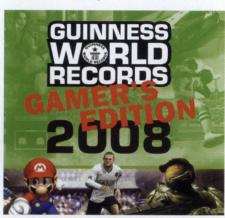
The actual songs themselves are yet to be announced, but at this point we're just pleased for a little more variety. Stay tuned.

RECORD **BREAKER**

When we were informed of the upcoming release of the Guinness World Records Gamer's Edition, we were initially sceptical. Yes, gaming has a burgeoning 'speed running' scene, where gamers race to finish the game in record time, and of course King of Kong a documentary about the battle for the highest score in the original Donkey Kong is currently in the midst of a successful run in theatres. Still, we wondered if anyone would be really interested.

We were, of course, totally wrong - the book is great with an overview of every genre and the records within it, not to mention a cool focus on the growing competitive gaming scene. It's an interesting read crammed full of interesting facts about all your favourite games.

Well worth checking out, and available now.







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We love you guys/gals! You guys/ gals are awesome. We lay awake at night trying to figure out what you want, what you want to see/read/ watch/play! But now we need some help. It won't take long.

If you hop over to http://www.

gameplayer.com.au/opssurvey we have some simple questions we'd like you to answer, just to help us make a PlayStation magazine more suited to your needs. We feel like we have a handle on what you guys want from the mag - but we could be wrong! Head

over to this webpage and vent, or show the love - it's all up to you...

And there's an added incentive take part in the survey and you'll go in the draw to win one of five free two year subscriptions! Go on - it'll only take five minutes!



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GAMES CHART



Rank	Title	Category	Distributor
	Army of Two	Action	EA
	Rainbow Six Vegas 2	FPS	Ubisoft
	Guitar Hero III: Legends of Rock	Music	Activision
	Viking: Battle for Asgard	Action	SEGA
	SingStar	Music	Sony
	MX Vs. ATV Untarned	Driving	THQ
	FIFA 08	Sports	EA

COMING SOON



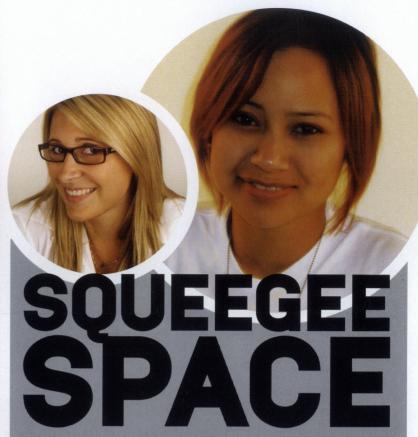




Rocksta

Racing

Format	Title	Category	Distributo	
APRIL	经交换的 (1) 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10			
PS3	Ferrari Challenge	Racing	Red Ant	
PS3	Grand Theft Auto IV	Action	Rockstar	
PS3	HEI\$T	Action	Atari	
PS3	Turning Point: Fall of Liberty FPS		Atari	
MAY				
PS3	Haze	FPS	Ubisoft	
PS3	Iron Man	Action	Sega	
PS2	Alone in the Dark	Horror	Atari	
PS2	Silent Hill Origins	Horror	Atari	
JUNE				
PS3	NFL Tour	Sports	EA	
PS3	LEGO Indiana Jones	Adventure	Activision	
PS3	Metal Gear Solid 4: Guns of the Patriots Action		Atari	
PS3	Sid Meier's Civilization Revolution	Strategy	2K	
2008 TBC				
PS3	Tales of the Abyss	Action	TBC	



Hey everyone, Jessica here. We've been getting a bunch of letters recently asking why I haven't been doing any reviews, well the answer is simple - I just don't have the time! Sorry everyone! But I have a solution that will hopefully please everyone... introducing Squeegee, my latest project! Squeegee is keen as mustard to get into videogames, but has nowhere to start. We're going to put her in the right direction starting next month, by giving her some games to review in this very magazine - giving us a fresh, female perspective on some classics. First off we have a quick interview, to let you get to know our prospective reviewer...

What up girlfriend - welcome to the team. Can you tell us a bit about yourself?

Hey there, my name's Squeegee S. Eldest of six kids, into playing my g-tar, concerts and festivals of the rock/metal persuasion, and am an incredibly desperate movie follower. I'm serious, I'll watch pretty much anything they've got in Blockbuster if I can't afford the cinemas.

So Squeegee (if that is you real name) you've spent the most part of your early life 'sans' gaming – why?

Like most kids, I blame my parents. They just didn't want me to have games "I want you to focus on your school work. Games are for boys," etc, etc. Now look at me, 20-years old, game-less, and with a freaky name like Squeegee – yes, it is my real name. I can produce birth certificates!

All right, so what made you want to delve into the scary world of games now?

The arcade – it's where it all started. I played House of the Dead IV, then Time

Crisis, basically whatever shoot-em-up I could get my hands on. I sucked, but hey, it was fun. Since then I figured consoles were something worth considering, especially with the likes of *Guitar Hero* (which is harder than the real thing, by the way).

Ah, ye old arcade. So Guitar Hero seems to be a good place to start - any other games float your boat?

I'd definitely give Rock Band a go (I went through a drumming phase back in high school), but to be honest I've only played very few games. Dynasty Warriors was the last one I've played. It was good because there weren't too many buttons to press (no one's explained to me what the hell they're for!) and it was pretty straightforward. I like games that you can be competitive in – like foozeball, right Marky?

Mark says to "shut up", and that he "totally let you win". So yeah, stupid Rock Band - hurry up and come out already. So yeah, you seem to be more interested in non-traditional game experiences: does a regular control pad, with its ridiculous amount of button-age intimidate you?

Totally! Especially when everyone I play with won't tell me what the buttons do – such a cheap shot. What's wrong wit ya? Scared of losing to a girl?!?

We'll sort you out! And finally Squeegee, are you excited about your game reviewing adventure?

Hell yeah! Gimme NOW! (please?)

Tune in next month for Squeegee's first review.

PS3

LittleBigPlanet

MotorStorm 2







Helicopters, or rotary wing aircraft, are some of the most difficult aircraft to learn to fly. But with Army training and a willingness to excel, you could be flying reconnaissance flights on exercises or deployments, lifting artillery guns and supplies or even dropping Special Forces soldiers into places we can't talk about. To ensure you're up to the challenges you might face, you'll take part in a Flight Screening Program to

"FLYING A BLACKHAWK IS NOT OUT OF THE REACH OF THE ORDINARY PERSON. I'M AN ORDINARY PERSON AND I DID IT."

measure your abilities and see whether you have what it takes. Successful completion of the Flight Screening Program will secure you an **Aviation Cadetship** and a guaranteed place on Pilot's Course once you've completed your Army Officer training at the prestigious Royal Military College – Duntroon. If you have a passion for aviation, Year 12 English and Advanced Maths, find out more by calling **13 19 01** or visit us now at **www.defencejobs.gov.au/army**



what's next for our favourite games? WHERE TO NOW?

GTAIV... is there anything this game can't do? Online dating, hanging out with your buddies at the bar, shooting pool... shooting everything in sight, basically this bad boy does everything. So, really, where to now for this world-beating series?



THE PROBLEM	THE SITUATION	FAILED SOLUTIONS	WHAT WOULD GTA DO?	GREAT SUCCESS?
CURE CANCER	Cancer is a problem, possibly the largest killer facing the human race right now. We've found ways to treat the lil' bastard, but until now a full blown cure has been elusive	Doctors have become pretty damn adept at finding ways to starve cancer, and slowly kill the bugger. Chémotherapy's success rate gets greater each year – but it still makes you bald. Bummer.	Pfft isn't it obvious? Scale the peaks of Mount Zion clad in the robes of Moses demanding God simply eradicate cancer from the history of mankind. If he says no? It would slap him in the face until he changed his mind.	Word.
STOP GLOBAL WARMING	The world is on the highway to hell, baby. The ice caps are melting, and pretty soon we'll be growing gills and webbed toes like Kevin Costner in <i>Waterworld</i> , and making out with mermaids. Actually that's a lie – we'll all be dead.	Greenpeace, hippies, and Al Gore all failed miserably. Then everyone tried that Earth Hour when everyone turned off electricity for an hour then went straight back to playing <i>Call of Duty 4</i> with all the lights on, and the air conditioner a-blazin'.	Hunt down Superman from his home planet of Krypton, drag him down to Earth by his pubic hairs and force him to blow that crazy 'freeze breath' of his until the ice caps are back to normal.	High five!
END THE IRAQ WAR	The 21st century's greatest joke – minus the punchline. The US and A invade a country to retrieve weaponry that didn't exist – might as well take all that oil while we're here, eh?	Sadly, George Bush's initial instructions to 'shoot the bad guys real good' resulted in massive failure – no doubt aided and abetted by the fact that Donald Rumsfeld couldn't even pee properly, let alone manage a full scale war effort	Round up a crack special forces team comprised of 80s action stars: Mr T, Sly Stallone, Bruce Willis, Arnold Scwarzenegger, Chuck Norris, and that guy with the beard from last issue. Drop them into the war zone – problem solved.	We support your war of terror!
MAKE BRITNEY SPEARS HOT AGAIN	The primary object of lust from our teenage years has transmogrified into a bald, acne-ridden, chubby, greasy-haired hick, with a faux British accent. Houston, we clearly have a problem.	Chris Crocker infamously implored that the world "LEAVE BRITNEY ALONE!!!" The world's response? To point and laugh at both Crocker and Spears, who promptly began eating more hotdogs.	What can anyone do? Perhaps GTA would implore that we, as a race, should move onto the next teenage bit of totty, and leave Britney alone – but it's fun to watch a car wreck.	FAILI
MAKE MEN PREGNANT	Ever since the heart warming rolleercoaster that was <i>Junior</i> , women have pondered upon the logistics of making men carry their own seed (kinda).	Apparently this is possible! By surgically implanted an embryo inside a man's abdomen, with a placenta attached to to an organ such as the bowel, men can theoretically harvest a child!	GTA would save mankind by breaking into the labs of each and every retarded researcher who has been retarded enough to work on this Godless subject, and burn everything to the ground.	YES
UNLEASH TIME TRAVEL	Since the enlightenment great minds have speculated upon the possibility of time travel. In many ways it's one of the holy grails of modern physics.	Whilst great minds such as Newton and Einstein have speculated on the possibility, only Dr Emmett L. Brown (affectionately known as 'Doc') has succeeded. Sadly he is a fictional character, and not actually real.	Tear the fabric between time and space, fact and fiction, to the point that neither is tangible. In the midst of the chaos it will create a DeLoreon so magnificent, that 'Doc' himself would exclaim, "Great Scott, Marty"!	What's mass got to do with it?
MAKE NUCLEAR FUSION WORK	With resources depleting, the powers of the world are locked in a mad scramble to find an alternative energy source. Nuclear Fusion, which would theoretically result in an endlessly reproductive source of energy, remains elusive.	As of yet scientists have failed to make Nuclear Fusion work as a viable alternative to fossil fuels – the dollar value of maintaining the reactor required is simply not cost efficient enough.	GTAV will be coated in a layer of awesome to such an extent that the game itself will actually work as an infinitely renewable energy source. It will also replace the Sun as the source of all life.	(Simply radiates from the warmth of <i>GTAV</i>)









HEAD TO HEAD



With the power of the PS3 under the bonnet, GT5 Prologue is our most realistic driving simulation ever. And for the first time ever in Gran Turismo, race online with up to 16 players going head to head. Get a taste of things to come — Gran Turismo 5 Prologue, available now on PLAYSTATION_®3.









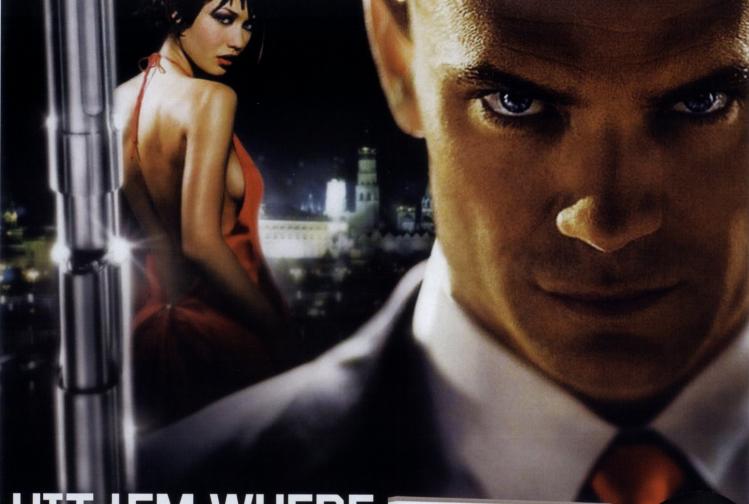
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COMPS

HOW TO ENTER

Send entries to ops@derventhoward.com.au with the name of the competition in the subject line, or post them to OPS Magazine, PO Box 1037, Bondi Junction, NSW 1355 with the name of the competition CLEARLY MARIKED on the envelope. Alternatively, head to www.gameplayer.com.au foldetalls. Include the name of the competition, your name, age, email address, contact humber, and more importantly, your full address and postoodel All competitions close on May 25. All competitions are open to residents of Australia and New Zealand.



HIT 'EM WHERE HITMAN IT HURTS!

The **Hitman movie** is that oh-so-rare thing: a screen adaptation that does the game justice. Timothy Olyphant is perfectly cast as agent 47, the all-killin', all-bald, smashin' assassin – and he pulls off the role nicely. **Hitman** is a well made piece of film that we recommend to fans of the franchise, and fans of gaming in general.

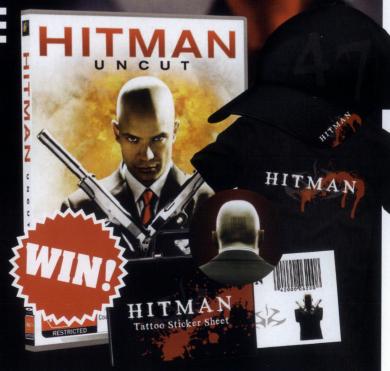
While we did a competition for the *Hitman* movie previously, the movie adaptation of the popular videogame has now made it to DVD, with the Blu-ray version making it to stores on May 28 – so those keen to own a copy should listen up, and listen up good.

We have 10 prize packs to give away, packed to the rafters with *Hitman* goodness, and then some. Here goes (deep breath)... we have a copy of the movie itself (on DVD), a copy of *Hitman*: *Blood Money* on PS2, a stylin' *Hitman* cap, and some smartly designed *Hitman* tattoos. Good stuff.

Entering the competition is easy. All you have to do is answer one simple question, and send the answer to us marked 'Hitman giveaway' following the instructions above. The 'question' in question? Here goes...

Question: Agent 47 is played by Timothy Olyphant, but who plays the hot piece of stuff opposite him?

- A Charlize Theron
- B Jeremy Iron
- C Olga Kurylenko



In life there are things/objects/people that you just want to watch fight. Women, for example. For some reason it's fun to watch the fairer sex go at it. Children, on the other hand, find joy in making bugs try to eat the hell out of each other - especially the 'when I grow up I want to be a serial killer' kind.

Adults, on the other hand, like to watch fictional monsters from outer space duke it out, hence the existence of Aliens vs. Predator 2: Requiem. Carrying on the themes from its predecessor, AvP2: R has the universe's finest killing the complete crap out of each other real good.

We have some sweet prizes to giveaway, in the form of Blu-rays of the movie, and an awesome handmade Predator figurine (valued at over \$800!). First prize receives the figurine, and a copy of the movie - while the 10 runners up each receive the AvP: R Blu-ray.

To enter all you have to do is answer the question below and send the answer to us marked 'AvP2: R giveaway', following the instructions on the opposite page.

Question: Who was the leading man in the first Predator movie?

- A Arnold Schwarzenegger
- Danny Glover
- C Dame Judi Dench



Tom Clancy's

OVER THE RAINBOW

What happens in Vegas stays in Vegas - unless you happen to be an addition to the barnstorming Rainbow Six franchise, in which case you can do whatever the hell you damn well please. Thankfully however they've stayed in Vegas... for the most part.

So yes, this is Rainbow Six Vegas 2, sequel to the original next gen bar of technical FPS excellence, and a solid move forward for the series. Shoot your friends in multiplayer mode, or hunt down that wily scallywag bad guy who evaded you in the original Vegas - the choice is ultimately yours.

copy of the game of course. We have

ten copies of Rainbow Six Vegas 2 to giveaway, and all that's required to be in the running is an answer to one simple question. Send the answers to us marked 'Vegas 2 giveaway', following the instructions on page 18, and reap the rewards.

Question: "Always bet on Black": which awesome movie did this quote originate from?

A Casino Royale



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LETTERS



LETTER OF THE MONTH

HE HAD TO SPLIT!

he other day I walked into a games shop, and found that Burnout Paradise had finally come out, I looked at the back cover and to my dismay I discovered it was singleplayer only – no multiplayer splitscreen. What the hell!?

I love this game franchise, *Burnout 2* and *Burnout 3* are the best, with the crash junctions, and overall racing. *Burnout Paradise* is excellent, but with the first four games the best part was to sit down with some mates, a few beers and play party mode racing and crashing in splitscreen.

What are they doing for the love of sweet baby jesus! Why don't they have splitscreen?

Hopefully MotorStorm 2, Race Driver: GRID and Gran Turismo 5 all have splitscreen. That's what I am lacking in my PS3 games so far – a killer multiplayer racer, I thought Burnout was going to be the one, but sadly I'll have to wait a little while longer. Is it too hard to keep the splitscreen gaming experience and add the online mode?

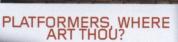
Dale Carroll, WA

Dale, ol' buddy ol' bean, thanks for raising this point, thus allowing us to get on our soapbox and rant about an issue that's been bugging the hell out of us for a while now. Games like Burnout Paradise (and Unreal Tournament 3 is another offender) are games that focus on the multiplayer experience – so to eliminate splitscreen is a cardinal offence as far as we're concerned.

We think it's a combination of two things: firstly, developers possibly see splitscreen as irrelevant in the face of online gaming, and secondly developers don't seem to enjoy the downscaling required in order to maintain the frame rate required for multiplayer gaming.

But Dale – both MotorStorm 2 and Resistance 2 wall no doubt sate your burning desire for splitscreen action.





■ Did you know that the bushed in Super Mario Brothers were actually clouds coloured green? Weird...

What has happened to all the platformers? All we have these days is Ratchet and Clank Future – the only light-hearted game (of note) available in the sea of adult shooters. Don't get me wrong, this topic isn't intended to criticise the overpopulation of FPS games (I am an FPS fan), but to complain about the distinct lack of platformers.

I can only think of two future platformers for the PS3, one of which isn't fully confirmed. There's LittleBigPlanet (which looks absolutely great, but still a while until release), and a possible Jak 4, but given the success of Uncharted.

and Naughty Dog practically confirming *Uncharted 2* is next on the cards, it could be ages before a *Jak 4* is realised.

Is this the end for light-hearted adventures/platformers?

Lance Millan, via email

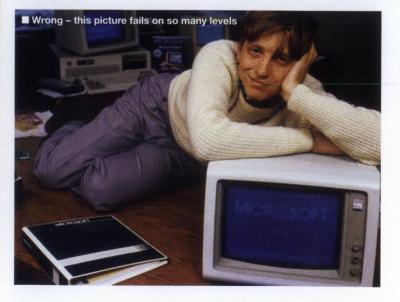
Whoa, what's with every single letter this month making complete perfect sense? There are many reasons why platformers seem to be on the out these days, and to be honest none of them seem to make that much sense. Publishers think that since shooters are in vogue, they can hop on the bandwagon - and make plenty of moolah atop said bandwagon. In addition, the fact that the average age of gamers is maturing rapidly seems to plant the idea that older gamers won't enjoy a genre traditionally targeted at vounger gamers - which again isn't strictly true. Hopefully LittleBigPlanet can prove that the genre still has a place in modern gaming.

BOO-URNS

Hey guys. I am looking as forward to GTAIV as much as you guys, maybe even more. But when I was reading about it and how awesome its gonna be, I stumbled across the revelation of episodic content... for the FRIGGIN' 360! Why the hell won't we get any extra content? We've been GTA's platform of choice more or less since the whole series started - so why are they trying to screw us over? Are we so old that we're being left for that young attractive whore?! We may be an older range of consoles, but we've been able to survive so long because WE'RE SO FRIGGIN' AWESOME! And I sure as hell hope Rockstar won't undermine this. because we've stuck with GTA since the franchise began, and if anyone deserves any extra delicious GTA gaming, its us!

Sam Fischer

We agree whole-heartedly with the sentiment that PS3 owners deserve the additional content more than 360 owners, but the fact of the matter is that Microsoft dug into Bill Gates private stash and secured some DLC. That being said, it's a moot point as far as we're concerned – we've played the game and the amount of content that has been squeezed into this masterpiece (as well as the incredible multiplayer) will keep you busy until... um, the end of time itself?



OPS TALKS TO TOM CLANCY ATOP A **BIG PILE OF MONEY**

OPS: So Mr. Clancy...
Clancy: I love GOOOOOOOLD! (strokes white cat on lap)

OPS: Ahem. Mr. Clancy, the interview? Can we proceed?

Clancy: Yes. Yes we can.

OPS: So you have become rich via the means of numerous licensed video game IPs, such as Rainbow Six, Splinter Cell

Clancy: Sorry, Splinter what? What is this Rainbow Six you speak of?

OPS: Sorry, what? They're videogames - videogames licensed under your

name. You're a brand name! Clancy: Video-what? Preposterous.

Listen young man, I write, well, used to write, books from the near future, and I haven't heard of anything called 'video games'. How ridiculous.

OPS: Wow, this is awkward. Clancy: Okay, moving on, let's talk about me for a while

OPS: All right, I guess.

Clancy: I love GOOOOOOOLD!

OPS: So let's talk about your line of work - writing books. Any cool new stories in the pipeline?

Clancy: Hahahahahaha! You're hilarious... you're cute!

OPS: Eh? What are you talking about? Clancy: I haven't written a book in years. People pay me to write books

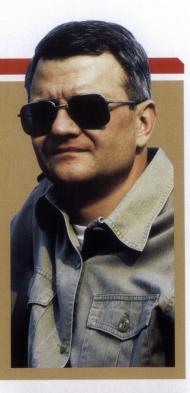
OPS: No wonder you're so bloody rich. you cheeky bastard!

Clancy: I know right!? I love G00000000000000LD!

OPS: Tom? Mr. Clancy? Are you

Clancy: G00000000000000LD!!!

(explodes into dollar bills)



■ Wuv - don't you just wuv it

HARD TIMES... DADDY

Your magazine has gotten me through a bit of a rough spot. Our TV broke a couple of weeks back which means I've been without my PS3. So I've been alternating between staring longing at my import copy of Burnout (that arrived the day after the TV broke), playing MGS: Portable Ops (it is fantastic game - especially if you ignore the plot) and reading and re-reading your magazine for my fix of PS3 goodness Like many people I'm psyched about the imminent release of GT5 Prologue (it will have to do until the full version comes out) but trying to drive properly using SIXAXIS is pretty difficult. So I am thinking about buying a driving wheel. I would appreciate it a lot if you would do a review of available driving wheels prior to April. Is that too much to ask?

Bowie Owens

Glad to hear we could help get you through those dark days Bowie... life with a PS3 (shudder). Sadly we spotted your email too late to come up with a guide for driving wheels, but we rather like the idea. Check again around GT5's release.

Delicious bite-sized letter morsels that are easy to swallow

BLU FOR YOU!

Alex, via email.

to HD DVD will now be making it's Kong and yes, Transformers

SHORT STRAWS

Jordan, via email.

No Jordan, it isn't iust vou. Australia is up there with countries like Pakistan and Argen-bloody-tina when it comes to release dates. But thank end. They had to wait almost a year for Paper Mario. Pffft, Paper Mario.

AWESOME

Anonymous, via email.

Steven, via email

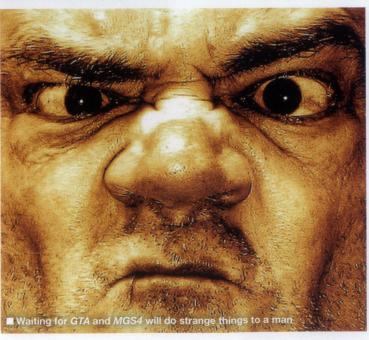
YOU LOVE US!

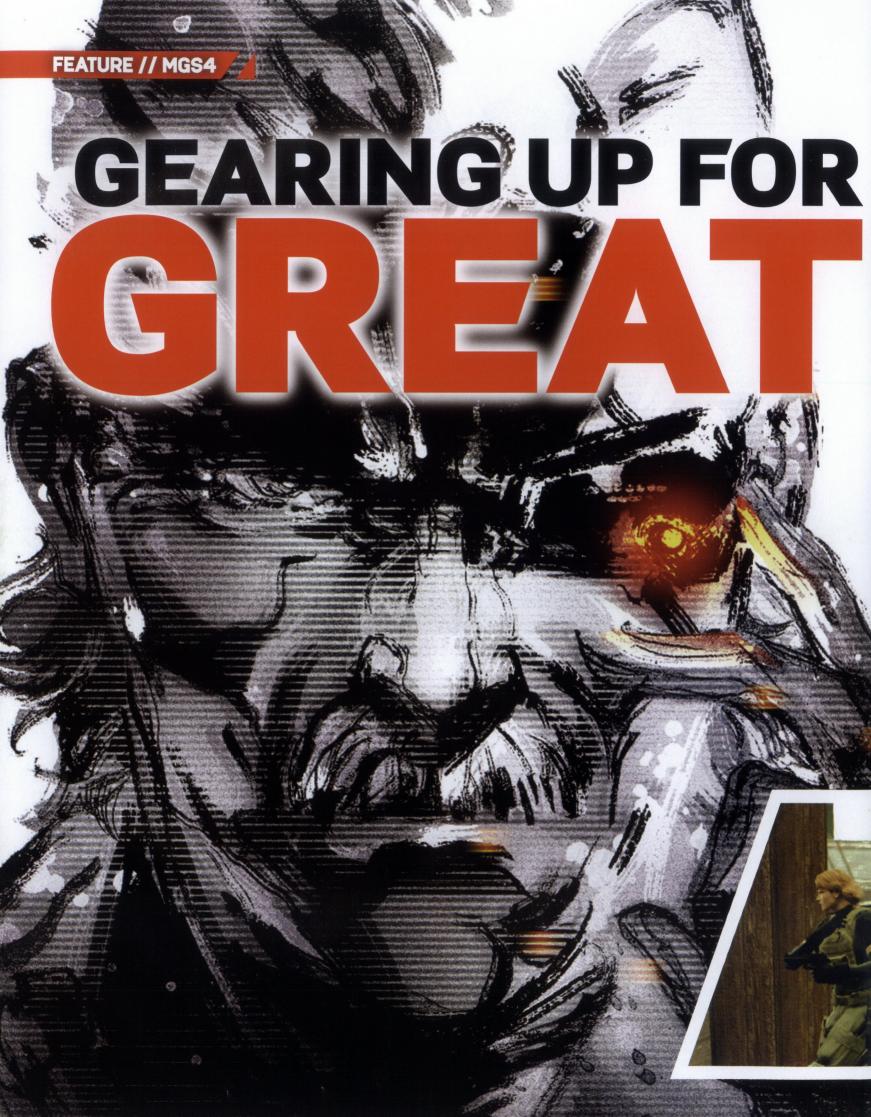
There was a time... a dark time... when I didn't know about OPS, and was reading other magazines, which were all right and had some good points, but lacked humour and general awesomeness. Then I moved on to other mags, searching endlessly in vain for the perfect gaming bible. And finally, when I thought all was lost, I saw your magazine on the shelves.

"Proper reviews, great contents, and funny? Surely I'm on crack" I exclaimed. But I wasn't... well, not crack at least. So since that time I've been reading your magazine for years now and all I have to say is, OPS... don't ever change.

Iona, via email

Every now and then lona, we like to chuck in a letter that talks about how unabashedly amazing we really are. After being told by our respective spouses that we play too many games, and sit around in our underpants all the time, smelling vaguely like cheese, it's nice to get an email that makes it all worthwhile. Thanks heaps Ional





As we're sure you are all aware, there are some rules in life – 'man-rules' that all fellas must follow no matter what. On road trips, for example, the strongest bladder determines toilet stops, not the weakest. Bringing a camera to a buck's night is sacrilege, and never, under any circumstances

ut deep in the Japanese mountains, within the confines of Konami's Blofeld-esque lair, midway through our full playthrough of *Metal Gear Solid 4*, a magical moment occurred – a moment that almost threw us off the course of manliness, forcing us to abandon manlaw forever in order to satisfy our own greedy fanboyish desires...

Midway through a marathon
eight-hour session with the game,
after copious amounts of Diet Coke
consumption, we needed to go – badly.
Rushing to the toilet, we let loose
with a drainage of Austin Powers
proportions. Mid-pee, we heard
the ominous click of footsteps
approaching, turning around
to check the source of said
footsteps, our jaw almost

hit the floor, to see the man – Hideo Kojima, on the way to relieve himself in the urinal right next to us.

may two men share the same umbrella. That's just common sense.

Man law states that us chaps cannot start a conversation mid-pee, but chaps – never in our adult life have we been so tempted to deviate from the true course of 'man', to break from the confines of the law and start jabbering at, nay worshipping, the mind behind one of the greatest franchises in gaming. But we didn't.

Thankfully we regained our composure and let the great man urinate in peace.

And this was just one of the surreal, bizarrely awesome moments that were almost commonplace at NASU's training camp (essentially Konami's hyper modern That's what happens when a Snake meets a chopper.

Wait... that sounds a little suspect...

"Snake... that moustache really suits you"
"Is this the time?! Is this really the time!!"

WORDS: MARK SERRELS

HIDE-FACTS! PART 1

Apparently the piece of media that influenced Kojima most for Metal Gear Solid is Lady of the Dunes, a surrealist novel in which a women is imprisoned in a room for years on end shovelling



SNAKE IN THE GRASS

Despite the fact that some of *Metal Gear Solid 4*'s major advances come in the shape of it's controls, the game initially feels familiar – especially for those who messed around with the 3D camera in *MGS3 Subsistence*. This is not a bad thing. While the new intricacies in control reveal themselves throughout the course of the game, in the beginning players familiar with the series will feel right at home.

And that familiar feeling of complete control, that sense of depth and weight, hasn't dissipated – if anything it has increased exponentially. CQC, the close combat system so revered in Snake Eater, returns with gusto – and the beauty of this combat system is that you can go as deep as you want with it.

Example. We're stuck between a rock and a hard place – there are two guards approaching from both the front and the rear. We hit the deck quickly, and activate our octocamo automatically; it's working at about 85% – meaning that if either of the guards get too close, the gig is up.

Spinning the 3D camera round, we realise that both guards are on a collision course with our hidden body. What to do? We play dead, but this has little effect as the guards continue on their path, so we draw our tranquilliser gun – things could get messy...

We wait, but the guard in front notices us, and moves in to investigate – it's now or never, and this has to be done perfectly. We line up a headshot, BAM! Perfect hit. The guard drops. His buddy from behind realises something's up, so instinctively we press (a) to turn slickly onto our back and quickly headshot the second guard.

Bugger. We only hit the shoulder, which means the guard has time to call for reinforcements before dropping lifelessly to the floor to catch some Zs – now everyone's after us. We get to our feet and attempt to disarm the first soldier of his weapon with some quick jabs – it works, we steal the guard's gun, but not before another injects us with a short burst of lead from his AK.

Crap. We then grab the disarmed soldier by the neck, and whilst holding

him in our deadly judo grasp, pull out our tranquilliser gun again. This buys us some time. The goons are way more hesitant to open fire, and this gives us the space to line up three perfect headshots for each pursuing guard. Now everyone is dead asleep, besides the poor bastard in our wily clutches – how shall we dispose of this one? Well for the sheer audacity of having approached us first we have no choice but to slit the poor bugger's throat and let him choke in his own blood.

But ultimately it's all about the choices – this whole scenario could have been approached in an almost infinite amount of ways and each, if played well by the player, would have resulted in some modicum of success. Of all the *Metal Gear* games that have come before it, *Guns of the Patriots* easily offers the most options for gamers in terms of approach.

TELLIN' STORIES... OR NOT

And about that storyline... well, after reading through the laundry list of things Konami told us we can't talk

DREBIN...

...Police Squad! Well, not exactly. Drebin is one of the new characters making his debut appearance in Metal Gear Solid 4. Looking suspiciously like Wesley Snipes in Demolition Man. Drebin is a gun launderer who helps out Snake by providing him with an arsenal that would John Matrix from Commando go, "Whoa, enough already". He is responsible for putting the underpants on the monkey. Respect.



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FEATURE // MGS4

about, it's pretty safe to say that there's only so much we can mention regarding the narrative.

But in many ways it's for the better. You may be salivating at the chops right now for spoiler after spoiler, but we can honestly say that after playing through all the twists and turns of this epic journey, opening the floodgates of the magic yet to come would only cheapen the potentially jaw dropping experience you have in front of you.

There are just so many moments in this epic tale where you will feel the urge to simply stand up and applaud. It's beyond cliché but you'll laugh, you'll recoil in horror, and if you're a big huge girly man/woman you might even shed a tear. Despite the fact that we want to

squeal, we're kinda glad Konami strongarmed us into going all Johnny Tight-Lips on the finer details.

Trust us, you'll thank us later.

ONE MORE TIME...

The real beauty of Metal Gear Solid 4, and the real strength of the franchise in general is this... immediately after finishing the game, the first thing we did was start the thing up again on a harder difficulty level. And in the precious few hours we had on our second playthrough, we had more fun than ever, and possibly enjoyed it even more than we did first time round.

The achievement in AI – from the ever-changing battlefield, to the enormous Gekko's tramping across the desolate landscape – is such that the game evolves to the player's presence, meaning that players can take a number of different approaches to this game, and have a completely different experience by doing so.

Never has a game managed to cram so much detail into a gaming world. The scale of thought and time that has been placed into every single aspect is such that a single playthrough could barely do it justice. On hard, with the difficulty cranked up a notch, the

entire game transforms into an eloquent, refined game of hide and seek, with an intensity and balance that almost renders the rest of console gaming mute.

Metal Gear Solid 4 is the kind of game that forces you to re-evaluate gaming as a medium – it provides you with that sobering perspective. This is what video games are capable of; this is the kind of experience that next gen hardware can provide. This is what it's all about people – and after playing through the entirety of MGS4, it's hard to settle for anything less.







JOYUIRINIE Y INTO IDAIRIKINIESS









MIRROR'S EDGE

And now for something completely different...

e dig new stuff. Fresh thinking and evolutionary ideas tickle our backs and scratch our fancies. It's why *Mirror's Edge*, the up and coming first-person pioneer from EA's DICE Sweden, has us arching our eyebrows in genuine interest.

Despite the game's name being as appealing as loo splashback, *Mirror's Edge* is out to hammer throw the first-person genre into left field. List every popular first-person convention, in fact, and *Mirror's Edge* stands ready with a thick red marker to cross them out. The

emphasis on shooting and gunplay, for instance – gone. Linear levels – gone too. Don't be fooled into thinking it's some sort of RPG walkabout though. *Mirror's Edge* is set to be an action adventure flasco that's out to relocate your heart into your mouth. How's it going to do that without chain guns, sticky grenades or floating cerebral bores? By focusing on an element new to the genre – by focusing on momentum.

"What? Momentum? Is this some sort of TV-to-game adaptation of Yes, I want to be a Gymnast?" Nope, this is



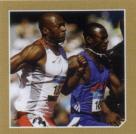
what happens when a group of fidgety developers want to provide something truly next gen.

Set in a fictional modern day totalitarian city, *Mirror's Edge's* lead is a young cupcake by the name of Faith. Now Faith, needs plenty of her namesake to undertake her job. Unlike her peers who flip burgers and refill mugacinos all day, Faith is a runner. Like parkour grand masters, runners are aerial couriers who leap around the skyline cityscape. Unfortunately, for reasons not yet disclosed, Faith's sister has been set up

and wrongfully thrown in the slammer and it's up to Faith to use her vertigo-slaying abilities to get her out. Along the way, though, she's set to peeve off a bunch of already angry folk who'll gladly chase her – guns blazing – across rooftops...

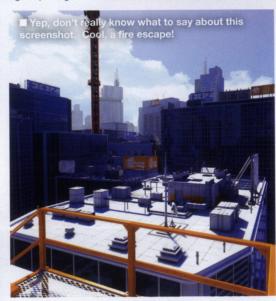
And here's where we come to the new-fangled gameplay. See, from DICE's perspective, leaping over a massive gap between two buildings or shimmying up the side of a skyscraper might look cool from a third-person view, but it'll feel absolutely scintillating direct from the character's peepers. Imagine sprinting

MARKS, GET SET... RUN FOR YOUR LIFE!



DICE has also hinted at the possibility that each section will be playable as a sort of race. Along with chase sequences the game will also include a bunch of platform-styled puzzles that will have to be navigated under pressure (apparently they're not going to be tosh like in other FPSs). It's possible there'll be some sort of online leader board to see which runner can get through each part of the level with the quickest time. Do the Reebok and Nike marketing departments know about this?







"...shimmying up the side of a skyscraper might look kinda cool from a third-person view, but it'll feel absolutely scintillating direct from the character's peepers..."



along, swarms of guards behind you, as you duck under pipes, slide over vents then leap over a 80 metre gap while having the freedom to look down at the ground and your flailing feet mid air.

Sounds ballsy to try and pull that off in the traditional first-person view, right? This is where the concept of momentum comes into play. Specifically DICE don't think much of the standard view we've all been privy to since the days of Doom. For starters most first-person shooter characters have no legs or arms peripheral vision isn't considered, and the camera rarely moves realistically when you're sprinting about. In Mirror's Edge all these issues have been tweaked. You have a whole body and limbs that snap about during moments of intense movement, the camera bobs around the faster you run, and some sense of peripheral vision has been applied. These alterations aren't so they can line the back of the game's box, but rather act as indicators of Faith's momentum. They're

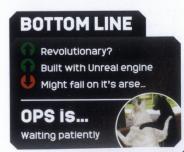
there to put you in the game.

Moving about with this seemingly realistic approach to the first-person view is also promised to be straightforward. There'll be two buttons assigned to dodging stuff as you sprint round like a cat in a pigeon coup: one for leaping over objects and the other for sliding under them. There'll also be a bunch of visual indicators throughout each level that will highlight which objects can be climbed or grappled.

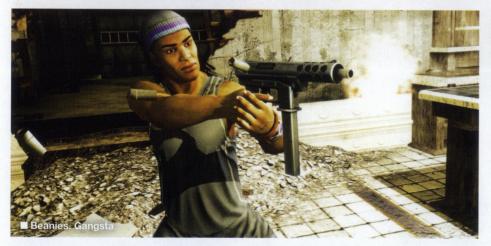
Not that you'll be spending all your time running away from everyone like a Granny purse snatcher. Corner a member of the alternate city's fuzz Gestapo and you'll be able to liberate them of their firearm to dispense some 'old school' justice and blow them to kingdom come. Unfortunately Faith is lacking those magically large bags of ammo that every first-person character slides down the birth canal with, so once she uses up all the weapon's bullets she'll quickly toss the weapon away. Think of guns in Mirror's Edge as temporary power ups. Fortunately she's pretty handy when it comes to pulling out ninja kicks and can hold her own in a fist fight, of which, according to DICE, there will be many.

Another pertinent issue is that unlike the cough-spluttered wave of GTA clones that have decided that open-world design is still the new black, Mirror's Edge has smartly realised that by offering up a huge go-anywhere city they'd be limiting themselves to grubby visuals. While alternate paths will play a large role, don't expect that you can dash from one side of the city to the other for the hell of it. Nope, expect quality A-to-B design. In our view, this is a big fat chunky thumbs up. Mirror's Edge will be using the snazzy Unreal engine so why try to turn the game into a fugly sea of lifeless geometry. Give us design, damn it!

DICE's latest has a lot going for it, but as with all brave ideas there's also a lot that could go wrong. However for the sake of the genre that has seen more than its fair share of sterile first-person outings, we've got our fingers, toes, and genitals crossed. **A James Ellis**









SAINTS ROW 2

Can these Saints pull off a miracle?

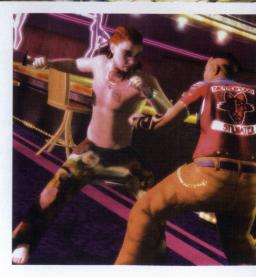
If there's one game that is truly putting its cock on the chopping block this year it's Saints Row 2. There are plenty of open-world ditties on the agenda for 2008, although all except Saints Row 2 really have hooks that place them somewhat outside the scope of the 800-pound GTAIV gorilla in the corner. Prototype has super-powers. Mafia II is set back in the '50s. Just Cause 2 has a Spanish James Bond and endless jungle. Saints Row 2 has thugs. And crime. It's a bold, bold move, and we respect the

effort. But can Volition really follow the $\mbox{\it GTA}$ juggernaut?

It's a tough call. Volition certainly seems to have taken a lot on board since the first Saints Row – originally slated to hit PS3 but subsequently shelved to divert resources towards to its sequel. Many of the criticisms have been addressed, although the more cynical and savvy will identify a lot of these changes as things that were successfully done back as far as GTA: Vice City. Flying vehicles, motorcycles, satchel charges, chainsaws

- they're not exactly new, but who cares as long as they're fun, right? True, mostly. You can't criticise a game of taking itself too seriously while a policewoman with a can of pepper spray is chasing you through white-trash central.

As far as we can see at this stage, Saints Row does have a single true trump card up its sleeve. That card? Co-op play for the duration of the game. We've already seen that robust co-op play can take an otherwise stock-standard game and give it the boost it needs to remain





compelling, and above all fun, enough for you and a mate to see it out to the closing credits. Army of Two, a paint-bynumbers shooter if there ever was one, is a decent two-player frag-fest thanks to some competent co-op.

Saints Row 2 will allow for all manner of two-player opportunities. Many of which are extensions of the original open-world multiplayer pioneered in a limited, but admiral, capacity in GTA: San Andreas. Back-up hombres, for instance, will be able to fire from attack choppers while the main man pilots the bird, and so on and so forth. It'll also allow for slightly more strategy when it comes to firefights - the ability to have a friend provide sniper cover as you head into the fray is neat.

Our hands-on did leave us a little

lukewarm, particularly with the incredible work Volition is doing with Red Faction: Guerrilla, but we can see potential. The character customisation should prove a real hit. You can modify everything about your on-screen avatar, from your sex to the way you swagger. We created a fat Hispanic bloke with a pimp lean in no time, but it could've just as easily been a 50-year-old woman in a bikini. Volition helpfully saw fit to equip us with a sack full of weapons and infinite ammo, which we quickly put to good use decimating the trailer park we began in. The controls seem functional, and although the vehicle physics seem a little stiff the helicopter was surprisingly easy to control. And quick too. We had fun in the chopper.

More soon. & Luke Reilly







UNCLE GARRY

We guess to prove he'll do anything for a paycheck these days, Gary Busey (yes, that Gary Busey) has recorded a number of promotional teasers for the new elements of Saints Row 2. We think he's gone crazy. You thought it was odd seeing him in a dress in Under Siege, wait until you see him laughing like an evil scientist as one of the on-screen characters teabags a fallen foe. Gary Busey videogame commercials - early contender for oddity of the year.



BOTTOM LINE

- Co-op for the whole game Tons of new additions
- Vehicle handling

OPS is... Well, playing GTA





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PLAYSTATION 3

PS3 PS2 PSP **PREVIEW**

- PLAYERS: 1-12 RELEASE: MID 2008
- DISTRIBUTOR: ATARI
- DEVELOPER: CODEMASTERS
- WEB: www.racedrivergrid.com









gel with the game. It's really a case of two things. One - appealing to the US market means selling-out to a significant degree. Flashy, shallow shite seems to do well with fickle Americans. Two - the crew at Codemasters appear to believe they've found a way to have their cake and eat it to. Keep the ruthless and spectacular crashes to appease the hardcore fans of the last three iterations of the Race Driver series, but dumb it down enough so gamers who don't really want to be punished for their mistakes will hop on board. Unfortunately, taking away the risk of knocking yourself out of a race entirely removes one of the key elements the Race Driver series previously had over its competitors. The fact that one mistake could cost you so dearly made the racing a tense, white-knuckle affair - just like the real thing. Allowing 'do-overs' spoils that. It needs tweaking or jettisoning. The handling doesn't quite feel spot-on either - the cars feel a shade light. We don't hate it, it's just different. - Luke Reilly

RACE DRIVER: GRID

We're going back in time!

e've got our paws on a robust build of Race Driver: GRID in OPS Towers, a game we're a little hot and cold about. The good? It looks great. It's not in the same league as GT5: Prologue, but we're yet to see a racer that is. Still, the cars are satisfyingly sharp, the track detail is nice and the special effects and damage impress. It sounds rad too - not surprising considering Colin McRae: DiRT featured

up to 96 active sound effects per car at any one time. Bounding over the San Francisco hills resulted in a symphony of squeaks, thunks and crunches.

One of the things we were most interested in exploring was the flashback feature, which gives players the ability to 'rewind' the last few seconds of gameplay - primarily to be used after terminal crashes. Honestly? This lowest common denominator stuff doesn't really



BOTTOM LINE

- Nice presentation
- Good sense of speed
- Flashback is dumb

OPS is...

Slightly sceptical



PS3 PS2 PSP

- GENRE: FIRST-PERSON SHOOTER
- PLAYERS: TBA
 RELEASE: LATE 2008
 DISTRIBUTOR: TBA
- DEVELOPER: KUJU
- WEB: www.kuju.com



TO END ALL WARS

The sun's shining down on these green fields of France...

acklash against WWII shooters is still mounting somewhat. Unfortunately there are plenty of gamers out there who feel they are the barometer against which all game concepts should be measured, and now they're over WWII shooters, they assume we're all over them - they're, "too, like, old". This, of course, ignores the fact we can count the WWII shooters due this year on one hand, (and, apparently, the eight billion current and upcoming FPS titles set in the future are immune from accusations of over-saturation). Our point is the self-appointed fun-police are going to have kittens when they get a load of

Kuju's latest. The UK developer has set its shooter a further 30 years into the past, in World War I. The nerve!

Ignoring completely the eye rolling of the laser-brigade, To End All Wars is quite an intriguing title. WWI has generally been fodder for PC flight-sims and little else - we're more than a little interested to see just how Kuju can tackle the brutal and unique nature of WWI combat and translate it into an exciting, authentic and, hopefully, profoundly moving digital experience.

As you'd expect, many a trip to the fields of France and Belgium has gone into faithfully recreating the battlefields

of the Great War, and the team was given access to the nearly 100-year-old equipment to ensure accuracy.

To End All Wars appears to take a distinctly Call of Duty approach to its warfare - you're one of many soldiers fighting towards a common goal, not a one-man-army. The levels themselves are said to be huge, and there'll be vehicles available to get around them if necessary (most of which seem to be vintage armoured cars)

The big question? Can we expect homage to the valiant struggle of the ANZACS at Gallipoli? We'll get back to vou. Luke Reilly







BOTTOM LINE

- Bold, unique setting
- Big levels
- Will it appeal?

OPS is... Digging in





PS3 PS2 PSP **PREVIEW**

- PLAYERS: 1 RELEASE: EARLY 2009
- DISTRIBUTOR: THQ ■ DEVELOPER: VIGIL GAMES
- WEB: www.darksidersvideogame.com





Resurrecting the guy who played Sloth in The Goonies - bad idea



■ Chicken on a stick: this is how it's served in the post-apocalypse

A HORSE IS A HORSE

DARKSIDERS: WRATH OF WAR

And there went forth a horse that was red...

he last game based on the Bible, that we know anyway, was a quiz game that we're pretty certain never made it to these shores. All we really remember about the Bible is the fact there were no dinosaurs in it, and the glare from the teacher when we asked why. Parents give kids the same glare when they find out the truth about Santa and their younger siblings are about. At any rate, this is all probably a little misleading. Darksiders: Wrath of War isn't really based that much on the Bible - just a verse or two. From Revelations, specifically. The Armageddon stuff.

Penned by legendary comic book dude Joe Madureira (X-Men. The Ultimates), Darksiders is set in a post-apocalyptic, demon-infested Earth world where the end of days came sooner than everyone thought, and didn't exactly go as planned. The war between angels and demons went to the bad guys, but the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse have been betrayed

by their master. One of them, War, is brought before The Charred Council, a neutral spiritual body that oversees the actions of Heaven and Hell and is subsequently stripped of his powers and sent to Earth to sort it all out.

We saw a short demo of Darksiders at THQ Gamer's Day and were treated to some distinctly Devil May Cry/God of War shooting and slashing shenanigans. The game itself is apparently split between a trashed metropolis and the Abyss, which is supposed to be a bit like Hell. Once it's all available, the world will be seamless. We watched War run around in the former, stabbing hordes of lurching humanoid demons - the Fallen. Now and then you'd see an angel battling a demon (the war isn't quite over) and come across a large boss encounter (War disarmed one huge, horned baddie quite literally - by chopping off his arms).

Looks tasty, but it's a longway off. Luke Reilly

You'll eventually be reunited with your horse, Ruin. This otherworldy steed gives War a host of new abilities to use, including trampling enemies and crossing dangerous areas of the world without necessarily, you know, dying. We watched War take on a giant sandworm in the Ashlands something only possible with the help of Ruin. At a few points the huge creature knocked War from the saddle but Ruin's supernatural abilities allow (him? It?) to be summoned out of thin air for a quick rescue.



BOTTOM LINE

- Great art direction
- Cool lead
- Needs a bigger hook

OPS is... Praying





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Mild sexual references



PLAYSTATION 3

PS3 PS2 PSP **PREVIEW**

- GENRE: ACTION PLAYERS: 1-2 (TBC) RELEASE: LATE 2008
- DISTRIBUTOR: THQ DEVELOPER: SANDBLAST GAMES
- WEB: www.destroyallhumansgar



DESTROY ALL HUMANS! PATH OF THE FURON

Humans take a beating... again

ames swapping developers is Neversoft did a good job with usually a tough thing to manage Guitar Hero III. but the series lost a little of its magic with distractions like Battle Mode. Traveller's Tales may make a mean LEGO game, but its work on the Crash Bandicoot series isn't a patch on that of Naughty Dog. It's with this in mind we've been a tad wary of Path of the Furon, but an eyes-on at THQ's Gamer's Day has allayed some of our concerns.

The premise is fairly simple. It's now the '70s and, flushed with some extra cash, Crypto has opened a family-friendly casino. Naturally, problems arise - one from the American Mafia and the other from his home world. Both of these have the potential to destroy him, so he sets about taking care of them.

To Sandblast Game's credit,

■ Mars attacks...

the developer hasn't simply taken Pandemic's cult fave, given it a next gen spit-and-polish and unleashed it on an unsuspecting public. Crypto has a glut of new weapons and abilities that expand the core experience of the Destroy All Humans! series significantly.

The Venus Human Trap is a giant plant-monster that can be summoned to feast on humans and objects. It feeds itself with its giant tentacles, although Crypto can manually feed it by grabbing humans and depositing them near the beast. The more it eats, the bigger it gets. The Black Hole Gun is fairly selfexplanatory, although it's quite spectacular - sucking everything within range into a wormhole. The Super Baller fires a bouncing ball, trailing a rainbow, which pins itself to humans and objects and bounces around the area.

Crypto's saucer now boasts the ability to change altitude and engage enemies in the air. It also features a few new gadgets, including homing drones that can actually punch through buildings and an improved Abducto-beam that sucks up pesky human scum like crumbs in a dustbuster.

It's Crypto's new telekinetic (PK) abilities, however, that impress most - particularly Temporal Fist. Temporal Fist allows you to freeze time for a short period and rearrange your surroundings how you see fit. Say a tank has just fired a shell at you - activate Temporal Fist. grab the shell and turn it around. When time restarts the tank will be destroyed by it's own ordinance! Neat.

The visuals were a shade below what we expected and we didn't see any missions but it certainly looks like a hoot.

More as we get it. - Luke Reilly





THE CITY IS YOUR CANVAS

As an aside, the damage you can do to the game's environments from your saucer is persistent, which opens up all kinds of immature possibilities. You can, for instance, burn a giant penis onto the side of a building with your saucer's death ray. Of course, you could just make do with a great big smiley face, or your name. Keep firing and eventually you'll burn through enough of the structure to bring the whole thing toppling to the ground. Right now it kinda looks like a big curtain falling down, but Sandblast may give it a tweak.



BOTTOM LINE

Cool destruction Improved anal probe Workmanlike visuals

OPS is... Hoping for the best





PS3 PS2 PSP **PREVIEW**

- PLAYERS: TBC RELEASE: TBA 2008
- DISTRIBUTOR: EA
 DEVELOPER: EA LOS ANGELES







COMMAND & CONQUER: RED ALERT 3

Better than melting ants with a magnifying glass

et's face it: real-time strategy games allow grown men to indulge in the sort of action-figure fantasies they crashed, boomed, and bammed to back when they thought all girls were lepers. You take your army of little guys, place them in their dinky vehicles of death, then melt the other poor bastards into oblivion. It's dorky as all hell, but who gives a

Thing is, if there was a RTS game that has been largely de-dorkified it's the Red Alert series. The second franchise from the Command and Conquer juggernaut, it's known for its arcade-styled pace, gumball cut-scenes, and being more addictive than Pringles.

Following news that World in Conflict is headed to the mouse-friendly PS3, EA have announced that C&C: Red Alert 3 will also be firming up the genre on Sony's slick black boiler.

Big on the agenda is a burly co-op campaign mode. While players could team up against the computer in previous Red Alert games on PC, Red Alert 3 will feature a host of close-knit teamwork strategies players will have to use to get through the campaign.

Story-wise, the Allies and Soviet powers are set to return for World War III but this time they'll be battling in an alternate timeline with a new menace thrown into the melee - the hi-tech Empire of the Rising Sun.

We're excited and not afraid to admit it, damn it! - James Ellis

BOTTOM LINE

- Easy to pick up
- Love the Red Alert universe

Lots of RTS competition

OPS is... Observing happily







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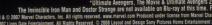


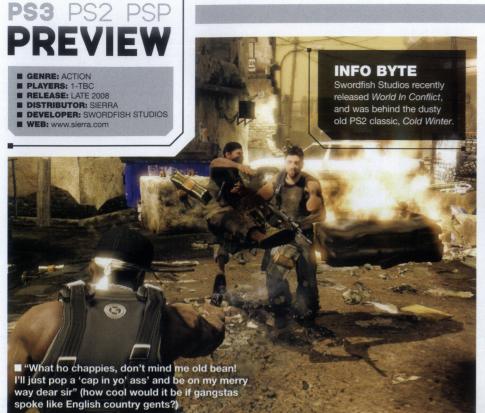


mature audiences

















50 CENT: BLOOD ON THE SAND

Drop lead on fools trying to get your paper

fter the less than shining performance of 50 Cent's previous outings, you could say we had our doubts about this sequel. Homeboy was no-where near as bulletproof as the title suggested. To be honest, that mofo was perforated by so many harsh reviews, it was starting to look like Swiss cheese, yo. Sure, the predecessors sold well, but a kick-arse experience they were not. Some would argue it's a quick cash in, but a clothing line would rake in more ends than a video game right? Just ask Diddy/Puffy/Sean Combs/whatever.

We prefer to think of it as Sierra's chance to come correct. It's still a little risky (kinda like turning up to the Source Awards sans Kevlar). Guess it's time to see how bulletproof our dog really is, and what sort of return you can expect to get

off a fifty-cent investment...

Here's the low down. There's a new player in town. He's been scoping you out and is now trying to jack you for your grip. Now Fiddy don't take that mess lying down. We all know he spits hot fire on the mic, now it's time to spit some hot lead on their punk asses and get back that paper, ya feel us? Come on, get with the Ebonics now, peeps!

Protecting yo ass(ets) is what it's all about, and giving this wannabe gangsta and his crew of punk beeyotches a little payback don't hurt none either. It's time to stay rich...or die tryin'.

Swordfish Studios isn't holding anything back in this juiced-up follow-up – it's promising some full-on intense action. Right off the bat, you've got drop in/drop out co-operative play, and we love

that (check out G...G..G..G..G..G..G..G..UNIT!!!). In fact, it should be a staple for any action game in our humble opinion. There's a whole new range of interactive counter kills to take advantage of, as well as Fiddy getting behind the wheel for some crazy running and gunning, a first for the series. Now, if that ain't enough, you can take off into the wild blue yonder and get some crazy aerial combat on. This bad boy's got all that, and a bag o' potato chips brother!

50 Cent: Blood on the Sand is looking surprisingly cool. The graphics are seriously tight, the hardcore in your face action sounds sweet, and you've got a host of bonus, previously unreleased 50 Cent and G-Unit tracks bumping in the background. Call us crazy, but this is looking kinda pimped. Pave Kozicki

G...G..G..G..G.G... G-UNIT!!!

Not only do you get to pop some caps as Fiddy Cent, but you get to wreck shop as G-Unit as well. Take your pick from Lloyd Banks, DJ Whoo Kid or Tony Yayo. We're hoping the next step will be multiplayer death match where you can face off against Dre and Eminem. Maybe bring Cube, Ren and Easy-E out of retirement (or the grave, as the case may be), with team leaders 2Pac and Biggie. Then we could finally squash that East Coast - West Coast bullshit! Fo rizz-eal!!



BOTTOM LINE

G-Unit and guns

Drop in co-op

Remember the last one?

OPS is...
Hedging its bets





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WWE SMACKDOWN VS. RAW 2009

The greased-up meatheads make their PS3 debut...

fter a false start last year, the WWE SmackDown vs. Raw is finally making its way to PS3 in the guise of WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2009. Believe it or not, SvR 2009 is actually the tenth title in the SmackDown! series – the first released on PSone in 2000. Right now, depending on who you believe, the series is actually the number one fighting game franchise in the world – which is either an admirable achievement or a bitterly depressing statistic. Either way, not bad for a sport that isn't, you know, actually real.

Moving on, we were lucky enough to get a glimpse of *Smackdown vs. Raw 2009* at THQs Gamer's Day and fans are in for a treat. *SvR 2009* is really about two major things – both of which are probably enough to have WWE tragics phoning their mates in desperate search of a buddy who'll be willing to pop around and rub baby oil of their upper shoulders. Create-A-Finisher and a co-op story mode (complete with overhauled tag team

mechanics) appear for the very first time in the series.

The all-new Create-A-Finisher, something fans have been begging for, will allow players to do just that - create their own finishing move and put it on either Create-A-Superstars or the existing WWE Superstars. A simple creation interface will let users piece together over 500 animations to form the ultimate full-stop to your fights. It's still a work in progress, but at this point the creation interface looks like it'll be fairly easy to master. On the left of the screen a green avatar carries out the moves you're scrolling between on the right side of the screen. A set of numbers across the top of the screen let you know what stage of the process you're at, and a tracker keeps a bead on how much of the move memory you've used.

The co-op story mode is more of a storyline for the Road to WrestleMania mode, but it comes with a host of changes to the tag team formula. The

first big change is that both members will function under the same momentum meter now, and the second is the introduction of double team finishers. It'll freshen up the action a tad.

The first of the series of PS3, SVR 2009 will likely have everything a wrestling fan needs for some oily action. The changes do seem to indicate that Yukes is trying to keep the experience fresh, which is admirable, given that it'd probably sell its waxed and sculpted mantits off recardless. **Luke Reillv**

WHY WORRY?

What about that 'other' wrestling game due out this year, *TNA iMPACT*? Well, the word is nobody's particularly worried. We hope they've got good reason. We dare say nobody was too worried at Neversoft about *SKATE* until it showed up on their doorstep and thoroughly trounced the stalled *Tony Hawk*'s series in one fell swoop! We hope pride comes doesn't come before the pin fall.



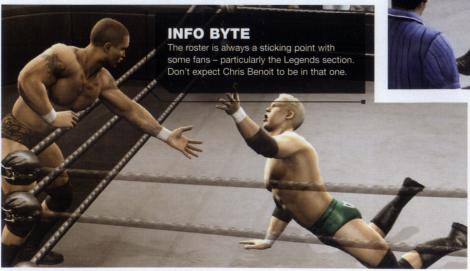
BOTTOM LINE

Create-A-Finisher
Tag Team tweaks
Too much man arse

OPS is...
Hulking up











PS3 PS2 PSP **PREVIEW**

- GENRE: FIRST-PERSON SHOOTER
- PLAYERS: 1-24 RELEASE: TBA
- DISTRIBUTOR: EA ■ DEVELOPER: DICE
- WEB: www.badcompany.ea.com







■ Name: Geoff. Likes: going to the cinema and long walks in the park. Dislikes; girls who think they're 'all that' and double dippers

BATTLEFIELD: BAD COMPANY

We're at war. Didn't you get the memo?

efore you jump to conclusions Battlefield: Bad Company isn't a revenge story featuring a disgruntled employee with a sawn off shottie heading towards your last place of employment - y'know, the people that underpaid you, gave you a six second lunch break, and photoshoped your head onto Amy Winehouse's body for an inter-office memo. No, Bad Company is a singleplayer-focused shooter featuring

a dysfunctional squad that consists of: Sergeant Redford: the gruff no nonsense leader of the group, George Haggard; the hilarious all-nonsense pyromaniac of the group, Sweetwater; the bespectacled brains of the squad, and your character; Preston Marlowe the useless FNG (abbreviation hint: the last two letters stand for 'New Guy')

One of the coolest features of Bad Company is the fact that 90% of the

levels are destructible, including buildings, vehicles, vegetation (people, we're hoping) and more. They've kept it to 90% destructible for gameplay purposes, so rather than smooshing the environment to look like your local municipal tip, the frames of buildings and other objects will remain indestructible. Obviously this opens up some great new gameplay options, example: got an enemy sniper problem? Demolish the tall building he's camping in and rifle butt him in the face for being so impersonal. With opportunities like these being likely, you can understand why we're excited to score this one & James Filis

– do you like

BOTTOM LINE

- OPS like destroy stuff Finally, some plot
- We need more than 90%

OPS is... Breaking stuff



PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIE

- GENRE: HORROR
 PLAYERS: 1-TBC
 RELEASE: LATE 08
 DISTRIBUTOR: EA
- DEVELOPER: EA REDWOOD SHORES
- WEB: www.ea.com/deadspace





space... and Sly Stallone wasn't 70-years-old

DEAD SPACE

Confront the ultimate evil in the final frontier...

he horror/space genre is one welcomed with open arms here at OPS. Frankly, there just ain't enough of it. We love the slow building of terror in the vast quiet of uncharted regions, knowing death could be just around the corner. Woo hoo! It gives us the willies just thinking about it. Seriously, who doesn't love having the holy crap scared out of them? By year's end (fingers crossed) we should all find out how scary

space can be, and we're not talking about Michael Bay's Armageddon either!

Details are slowly starting to trickle down the pipeline for Dead Space. and we're grateful, as some of us have been tearing our hair out in anticipation. It's looking like a cross between Event Horizon and Alien as far as tone goes, and we like that.

A team is sent to investigate the status of the Ishimura - also known as

a planet cracker. These massive ships are used to mine dead planets for their natural resources, and in the process the Ishimura releases pure concentrated evil that begins to infect and take over the crew. Without this knowledge, the team arrives on the Ishimura and all hell breaks loose, literally. It's up to our main man, Isaac Clarke, to put all the pieces of the puzzle together and save the day.

Dead Space is really shaping up nicely. The lead character seems to have his own agenda, and is a jack-of-alltrades engineer instead of some hard bastard with a gun and surly attitude. Hopefully this should lead to some truly wonderful WTF moments and we can't wait! - Dave Kozicki





BOTTOM LINE

- Gravity defying FPS!
- Scary scary stuff... Not out 'til year's end

OPS is... Shit-scared





PS3 PS2 PSP **PREVIEW**

- PLAYERS: 1-4 (2-16 ONLINE)
 RELEASE: NOW
- DISTRIBUTOR: RED ANT DEVELOPER: MILESTONE
- WEB: www.sbk07.com



SBK-08 SUPERBIKE WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

It's loud, it's proud, and it's only got two wheels

here's just something about most bike racing games that makes them just that little bit less popular than car racing games. Perhaps it's because, just as in the real world, they're much more intimidating than cars. Stuff up in a car and you crash. Stuff up on a bike and you're dead. More or less.

Whatever the reason, it's a damn shame, because bike racing games have an immediacy and a thrill factor missing from most car games - just like in real life.

The Superbike World Championship (SBK) was originally considered a step below the MotoGP Championship, but with recent rule changes eliminating some key differences between the two (primarily the decision to use four-stroke engines in MotoGP), the SBK has been inching ahead in popularity. It's long been a racing truism that 'what wins on Sunday sells on Monday' and in that department the superbikes have a huge advantage, being based on production bikes that punters can indeed buy on Monday.

All of which is a way of saying that SBK-08 has its work cut out for it. Fully licensed, with all riders, bikes and tracks, it's a highly accessible entry point for

those of us who are intrigued by bikes but found games like Tourist Trophy and the MotoGP series a little too technical.

It's pretty good. The overall sensation of speed is great and the five different levels of realism, combined with extensive bike tuning options, mean you can begin as a novice and hone your skills till you're matching settings, lap times and finishing positions with the pros.

One nice innovation is the in game 'engineer', who acts as an in-game tutorial, giving suggestions on setup changes and as a result, teaching you how to get the best out of your bike.

♣ Michael Butler

BOTTOM LINE

Cool engineer gimmick Really, really fast

Just an update?

OPS is... Hedging its bets





Riders on The Storm

MotorStorm 2 producer Paul Hollywood drops into *OPS* Towers to talk dirty



ops: We can see immediately what's changed; you've ditched the desert for a deserted island. What sort of avenues does that open up?

PH: Lots, lots. In relation to MotorStorm
1, and MotorStorm 1's environment, that
was a very consistent environment. It was
Monument Valley; it was desert – red rock.
We had mud in there, as well as some
destructible objects. It was a good platform
to start building up our technology again.
Now that we have all that technology built
and running it allows us to be a bit more
elaborate with where we're going to set the
game. So that was the first thing we wanted
to do, pick a really cool location and put
the same, cool gaming experience – what
we call the MotorStorm DNA – in a different

location. What we've done is created this fictitious island, but we've based it on Hawaii. We've taken all the best bits of Hawaii and sort of mashed them together. So, on the island we've got vegetation, we've got water, we've got lava, we've got tracks on ridges, going around corners - so there's a lot more of a variety of racing environments and, from that, gameplay additions to the racing series.

OPS: Hawaii boasts 11 of the 13 climate zones in the world – we imagine the tracks are wildly varied.

PH: I was lucky enough to go on the reference trip, which was a fantastic experience, and while I was there I was just thinking, "All we have to do is replicate this and it's a winner straight away." The one thing for me about the environment was the tension between different areas, different environment types. You walk around the corner and you've gone from bush, jungle, rainforest to death, barren – nothing, like



Shiny next gen mud: it never gets old



FEATURE // INTERVIEW

a lava field. That sort of tension between those areas and that sort of variety, when you put them into the tracks, gives you a really good racing experience. We've got 16 tracks in the game now, which is twice as many as we had in the first game. We've got them spread out, using all those elemental features.

ops: We found the original *MotorStorm* reminded us of SSX – it wasn't the amount of tracks, it was the quality of the tracks. Each track was finely crafted and a star in its own right. Is it difficult is it to build tracks with character and balance so many multiple routes?

PH: Yes, it's very difficult. Basically, what we have in *MotorStorm* is seven different classes of vehicles. You have the bike, the ATV, the

rear-wheel-drive buggy, the rally car, the racing truck, the mud plugger and the big rig. So, what we wanted to do, depending on which vehicles you chose, is make sure that experience gives you sort of the same lap time as you go around the track. So, in essence,

the monster trucks, which add to the whole sweeping vehicle experience. So we have even more of a challenge now with the tracks to balance a vehicle that can basically drive over everything and take through water a lot easier. So the process of designing the tracks end of the year. Between now and then we're going to go through that process of refinement – we didn't quite have that luxury on the first game because we were doing a launch title for the PlayStation 3. We created the game, and with all the best intentions to produce

the best game that we could, but I'm looking forward so much more to this game because we now have that period where we can really, really refine it and make sure the tracks are absolutely perfect. Of course we've

doubled our number of tracks, so we've got a little bit more work to do. There's a lot more in the game, therefore there's a lot more to tune up.

Another thing I'd like to say, another big thing for me about the game – again,

"We've got 16 tracks in the game now, which is twice as many as we had in the first game..."

the tracks were seven tracks in one. We had to balance the routes, and we used destructible objects and mud to keep the vehicles within comparative lap times. Now we've introduced an eighth vehicle class, so now we've got

is very tough – we build it, we play it and we tweak it, and that goes on for months and months. Where we're at right now is we've got all the components together, all the technologies are now defined and we're due to go out towards the



going back to MotorStorm 1, we did as much as we could in the time we had to get the game out - the main omission, and the first thing we planned for MotorStorm 2, was split-screen racing. We've now got four-player split-screen racing. We knew it'd be really good fun, and the whole community was saying, "We want it" - and they're absolutely right, we're playing it in the studio now and it's fantastic. My ambition is to have something that will be, for this generation of consoles, the ultimate multi-racing game - the whole split-screen, social experience. We've also got 16-players online and new game

OPS: What do you feel your competition within this space is?

PH: I believe that when we created MotorStorm 1 we brought something new to the racing genre, something fresh, The thing we tried to do, and our mantra, is that every moment make sure the player is firstly entertained, then they're challenged and that's what I believe gives that special edge to the game - there's always action going on, there's always something fun, laughter, rivalry, so we built upon that for MotorStorm 2. We're not aiming to beat anybody else; we're creating our own path. There are quite a few games that are trying to follow us, but all we want to do is create something that is a racing game, and we have come from a heritage of serious racing games with the WRC series, but it's only got one foot in that sort of reality, the other foot is in pure entertainment, pure laugh-out-loud gear. We try not to concern ourselves too much with the competition; we have our own extremely high expectations.

We spend a lot of time, late at night, working hard, pushing ourselves as far as we can.

OPS: After the success of MotorStorm, would you say there's a new eagerness? You did five iterations of *WRC*, and while *Rally Evolved* was rad is there a new buzz at Evolution now you've started something fresh and huge?

PH: I'm really pleased you like Rally Evolved, that was the one I was around for. The reaction to working on five WRC games, and having that license restraint – you can't smash the vehicle up in the way, you can't do that, you can't drive there, creatively it was incredibly frustrating for us – the reaction to that was MotorStorm. We've got the massive power of this console to do everything we wanted to do in a computer game and we had the opportunity to do a launch title, so we knew

it'd have a lot of exposure straight away. It was like every Christmas and birthday coming at once, and we grabbed it by the horns and just went for it. I was very proud when we finished the game, and we got the game out in the box and had people playing it. Since then, the success, we're the global number one bestselling PlayStation 3 game at this stage - that's something you wish for but you don't expect. Our benchmark now is to beat ourselves, and better, not only the commercial success but also the critical success, and get that following behind us and keep going from strength to strength.

OPS: With the popularity of user-created content of the rise and the potential for hilarious captured moments from *MotorStorm*, not unlike *SKATE*, very high, is this something you've considered?

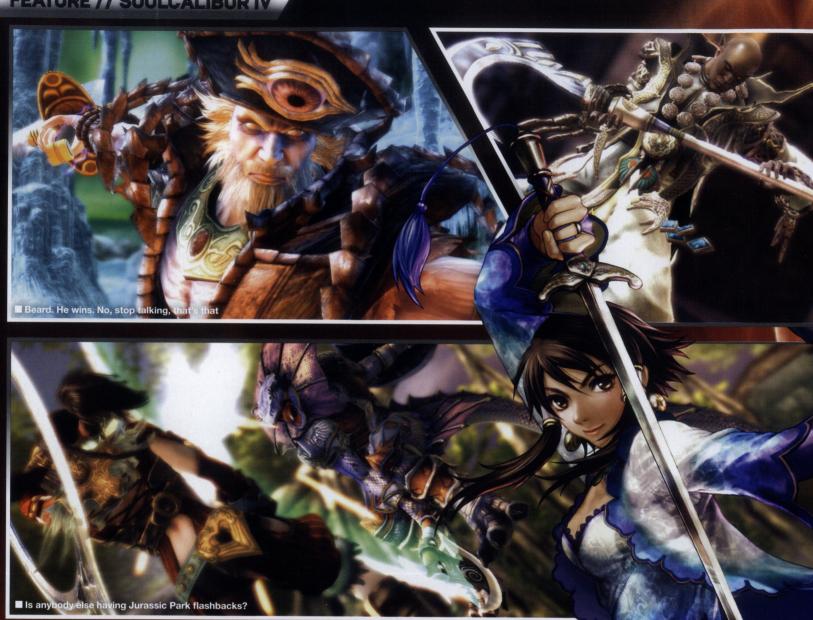
PH: Yeah, we've considered it... 4







FEATURE // SOULCALIBUR IV



t's raining in Tokyo, and the trapezium-shaped Namco Bandai building may just be the oddest thing we've seen so far during our flying visit to the land of the rising sun. It most certainly won't be by the time we leave (that's a three-way tie between the cappuccino-in-a-can, a bald businessman trying to sneak into the ladies toilets at GASPANIC, and the build-your-own-octopusbondage-action-figure from a gumball machine), but after a few local ales and some authentic Japanese spaghetti bolognaise the place looks decidely kooky. As the cabal of journalists from all corners of Europe, and in our case, Sydney, dutifully file into the foyer we're greeted with a smiling Pac-Man. We we're hoping for one, although he resides off the main path behind a sign we can't read, but probably says 'Don't Touch'. We resist the urge to sneak over and stick our heads in his mouth for a photo, mostly just because there's a pleasant looking security guard standing nearby who, if the rest of Japan is anything to go by, is probably the most polite man on Earth. We didn't want to have to make him tell us to

stop – he'd probably feel terrible. Besides, we were here to play

Soulcalibur IV.

THE SOUL STILL BURNS

It's a familiar beast, Soulcalibur IV. Fans will probably be relieved to know Namco hasn't drastically changed the series in any harmful ways. An array of tweaks will help ease newcomers into its considerable depth, but we think Soulcalibur pundits of old will remain pleased. The game itself has been totally rebuilt, cashing in on the strengths of the new generation of ridiculously powerful hardware – but this isn't revolution, it's evolution.

We were able to get our hands on a few returning favourites (as well as new characters like Hilde and guest star Darth Vader) and were, more or less, instantly at home behind the controls. That, however, is not to say there isn't anything new in SCIV. Quite the opposite, in fact.



SO IS IT ONE WORD OR TWO?

Confusion still reigns as to whether it's Soulcalibur or Soul Calibur. Officially, it's the former. According to the handy style guide Namco saw fit to provide us with on our recent sojourn to Japan, and (most) SCIV press releases it's Soulcalibur. Back when EA distributed SCII, however, it was marketed locally as two words - and the original Soul Blade was two words as well. People seem to be slowly coming around to the whole oneword thing, even though it doesn't actually make sense. So, Soulcalibur the game is one word, but the sword itself, the Soul Calibur, is two words? Man, we need to sit down for a second or two.

endless blocking, the Soul Gauge is an important new feature. When neither player has the upper hand the gauge remains a neutral green, but as one player lands strikes things begin to change. The Soul Gauge of the player with the advantage begins to turn blue, and the Soul Gauge of the player getting wailed on - albeit blocking - begins to turn red. When they begin to flash things become slightly more interesting. The Soul Gauge is linked to another new gauge - one linked to the armour on the characters. At moments of extreme disadvantage (when your Soul Gauge is flashing red) it's possible for your attacker to land a massive blow that'll destroy part of your armour - lower, middle or upper (depending on the hit you take). If they're successful, a segment of this second gauge will disappear - along with any armour you're wearing in that particular area. You'll see it shatter, and your character will take on a distinctly different appearance. This isn't, however, solely a visual thing - destruction of a part of your opponent's armour opens them up to what Namco is calling the Critical Finish. The Critical Finish is a

difficult one-hit-kill move that can only be performed after you've destroyed a chunk of your foe's armour. It's persistent across the match, so you can successfully demolish somebody's armour in one round and nail a Critical Finish on them in the next. We were only privy to a few on these finishers - Siegfried's involved an explosion of giant shards of ice from below the ground and Taki's one seemed to involve a bunch a several teleporting doppelgangers getting stabby. Nifty.

They remind us somewhat of Mortal Kombat's Fatalities, although SCIV's finishers are bloodless and aren't a footnote to a winning bout - they're a decisive way to end one.

The reasoning behind a lot of these changes is simple - when an opponent is guarding it's often incredibly tough to find an opening. The Soul Gauge and Critical Finish moves make remaining entirely on the defensive untenable - you have to fight, or else you'll be thoroughly softened up and promptly executed. It adds a new strategic layer to what's already far more than a simple button-basher and encourages players to go on the offensive.

FEATURE // SOULCALIBUR IV





NEW BLOOD

Then, of course, there are the new characters. One of them in particular, was a rather striking departure for the series. New lass Hildegard von Krone, or Hilde for short, is remarkably different to the usual Soulcalibur female sword-swingers. With the exception of her face there's nary a sliver of flesh to be been seen, and her armour-clad frame is a real change for the normally quite scantily clad female contingent of the SC series. Her breasts are safely tucked away underneath armour-plating - not flapping around in the breeze like two bags of oranges. However, it's not just Hilde's design and outfit that set her apart, though, it's also her gear. Hilde wields both a short sword and

a spear, which means she's relatively adept at both short- and long-range attacks. Hilde dual wields these bad boys, constantly balancing her attacks between distance strikes and closequarters combat.

Each of Hilde's weapons is assigned to different buttons on the controller, and can be combined for different vertical and horizontal strikes. Players ought to have a good deal of flexibility with Hilde, and although not all her moveset was in place we found she was able to more than measure up to some series stalwarts. Poke, slash, poke, slash. She's good.

SITH HAPPENS

Of course, it'd be remiss of us not to report upon our time with SCIV's bonus bad-arse, Darth "Who's Your Daddy? Vader. Darth Vader will ship as an unlockable contender in the PS3 version of SCIV - Xbox 360 owners will need to make do with Yoda. There's a better than average chance we'll see Yoda as a downloadable extra on the PS Network, but for now we're more than content with Vader. Yoda is a bit of a bitch, we found. We had about half-a-dozen stoushes with Vader, who has a ton of powerful moves at his disposal. An additional gauge, unique to the Star Wars characters. is the Force Gauge. The Force Gauge indicates when you're able to unleash a Force Move. In Vader's case they vary between a telekinetic choke-slam, a Force toss (handy for ring-outs) and a couple of others equally cool Force abilites. His moves are highly effective, but also great to watch. It helps that the Vader model is incredibly detailed, down to his long, flowing cloak that drags on the ground. He even comes with his own stage, set inside the hangar of the Death Star - complete with X-Wings dogfighting with Tie Fighters in the background, forcefields

that damage opponents knocked



Way back in Spring, 2001, everybody's favourite fat and jolly martial arts star Sammo Hung began plans for a movie adaptation of Soulcalibur, with Jackie Chan set to star. Then nothing happened. Any trace of the movie disappeared from Sammo's official website and it was assumed the film was cancelled. Warren Zide's Anthem Pictures since acquired the rights to adapt the game to film, and unveiled a teaser website. Unfortunately, the only update to said website in two years was the changing of the intended release year to 2007. All but the very slowest of you are probably aware it's currently 2008. We think this is deader than disco.



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Also available on PlayStation 2. Exclusive to PlayStation playstation.com.au



FEATURE // SOULCALIBUR IV



into them and John Williams' haunting Imperial March – Darth Vader's theme – playing in the background. It's no surprise, really, but we dare say Darth will be the default choice for many PS3 owners.

Why Darth Vader? It's quite an anecdote, really. The story goes that the team were digging for potential cameo characters for SCIV, and the lightsabrewielding Jedi Knights were put forward as a lighthearted suggestion - no one really believing such an coup could be arranged. However, what seemed impossible turned out to be quite the opposite - the potentially sticky licensing maze was navigated and, loand-behold, the scourge of the galaxy is facing off against armour-plated Samurai and ample-chested assassins.

GET ACTIVE

Also new is SCIV's Active

Matching Battle system, or AMB for fans of geeky acronyms. AMB struck us, at least, as a kind of team-based tag match where team of opponents battled each other (or just one opponent) for ultimate supremacy. The bouts, as far as we could tell, were replaced with life points. Extinguish all your opponents' orbs' and you win. Competitive online makes its debut too, although details are scant. The Create-a-Player mode returns, no doubt buoyed by next gen muscle (especially after the slightly disappointing customisation of SCIII.

HARD YAKKA

If you're wondering just how much work goes into a fighting game like Soulcalibur IV, you're not the first. How tough can it be, really? Build a few characters, get them to swipe at each other – job done? Naturally, no. In fact it takes months and

months of work for the crew at Project Soul to introduce just one new character. They need to be built, sure, but more importantly they need to be balanced – and that's what every fighting game strives for, and what Project Soul strives for.

In this day and age, Namco will be able to update SCIV over the magic of the PS network should any unforeseen exploits make it through the rigorous testing procedures it has in place – but that doesn't make getting it right the first time any less important.

Soulcalibur IV, for many at Namco, is the culmination of many, many years of work on the franchise. It was abundantly clear to us from our time with the team that they're extremely dedicated to crafting the ultimate brawler. For fans, it'll be the series' first dabble in the next gen pool, and we don't think they'll be disappointed.

COLLECTIVE SOUL

For those who came in late, the *Soul* series revolves around a sword that, after years of intense bloodshed, gained a soul of its own (the Soul Edge), and the sword forged to counter it, (the Soul Calibur). It's not Shakespeare but the popular series has been a consitent critical success.

Soul Edge/Soul Blade (1996/1997)

Dubbed Soul Edge in Japan and Soul Blade elsewhere, the game follows nine warriors in a quest to obtain

the legendary sword, the Soul Edge. After first appearing in arcades it was ported to the original PlayStation console and received widespread praise for its innovation.

Soulcalibur (1998/1999)

The second game in the Soul series, ported from arcades to the Sega Dreamcast. It went on to became one of the best-

selling Dreamcast titles ever and is often cited as the greatest fighting game of all time. It is ranked as the fourth-best game of all-time by review aggregator site Game Rankings.

Soulcalibur II (2002/2003)

Soulcalibur II was released in arcades three years after the previous outing, and subsequently ported to all three

consoles last generation. The game reaped near-perfect reviews. It was the first game in the series to feature cameos – featured on PS2's roster is Heihachi Mishima from Tekken.

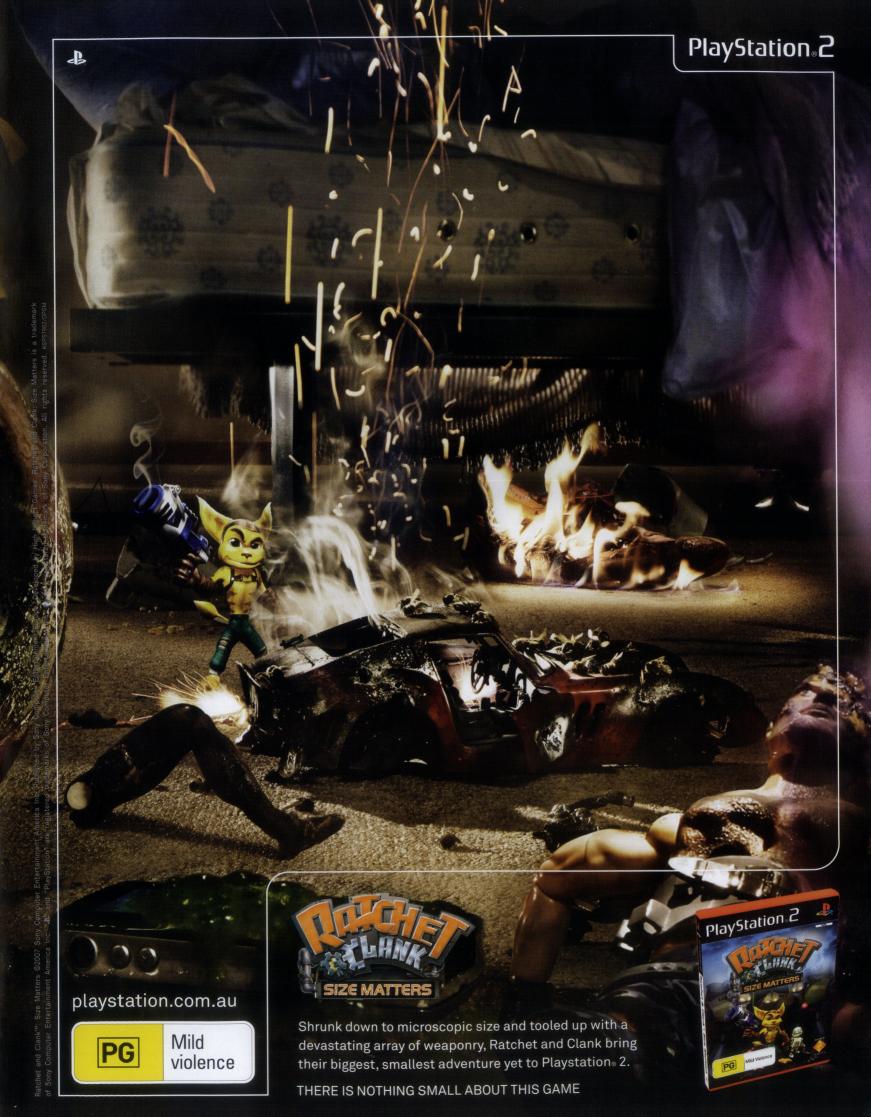
Soulcalibur III (2005)

Breaking with tradition, SCIII was released only for PS2 in 2005, before an arcade edition was seen. It featured 42 selectable characters

and interactive stages. SCIII is generally regarded as the weakest, despite its character creation system and 'Chronicles of the Sword' story mode.







FEATURE // INTERVIEW

PS: We've been haunted by that tantalizing (German speaking) trailer since the convention at Leipzig. Whatever was going on in that restaurant scene, it looked like pretty serious business. Can you give us a better insight into the main characters and the plot of Mafia II?

Daniel Vavra: *Mafia II* is about Vito Scaletta, young native-born Sicilian wannabe and his buddy Joe Barbaro, who grew up in poor neighborhood with gangsters as their only role models. Vito wants a better life than his father had and because he has no

fat party animal" Hawaiian shirt). Is dark comedic relief a major feature in this sequel – and are you using any noteworthy voice actors in the game?

DV: Yeah, there is lot of dark humor. The story itself is not very optimistic, but I think that what makes a good gangster flick is the right mix of drama and dark humor. A dark or a funny character? It is our goal that *Mafia II* will have the right mixture of both drama and humour.

The English voiceovers you heard are still not final and not all of the actors have been selected.

OPS: Looking back, were there any key elements of the cult-classic original that you've purposefully decided to retain and evolve for this sequel?

DV: We wanted to stick with all the elements that made the first game such a memorable experience. Those being, a movie-like, story-based experience instead of a "you can do everything" sandbox game. Of course you can still do almost anything, but our main goal from the onset of this project was to to craft a truly engaging story, intense action-oriented gameplay, characters the gameplayers can really bond to,

be featured in *Mafia II*. Regarding multiplayer, we are very much focused on creating an incredible single player experience and don't want to divert any effort away from this one singular goal.

OPS: Do you plan to take advantage of the PlayStation Network by offering downloadable content/user created content for Mafia II in the future?

DV: Playstation Network offers some great opportunities and we already have some very cool ideas for downloadable content, but nothing has been finalised.



DAMMIT FEELS GOOD TO BE A GANGSTER

OPS grills Daniel Vavra, Lead Designer and Story Writer for Mafia II at 2K Czech

WORDS BY: ADAI'I INATHEW

education, he decides to become a "made man". Joe on the other hand just enjoys being a respected bad guy. We tell the story about how they try to become real mobsters. Gamers will experience Vito's rise through to ranks as he tries to become a respected member of the Organized Crime community.

OPS: Also, we were struck like a Sicilian backslap by the impressive detail on some of the character models portrayed in the trailer – are we talking game engine there, or pre-rendered cutscenes?

DV: The trailer is a pre-rendered video using game models. I guess you already saw a bunch of new screenshots from the game, so you can see for yourself how close to the trailer they actually are.

OPS: When we finally saw the English trailer we heard a great deal of witty dialogue coming from the characters (in particular the chubby gangster in the "big OPS: Whether it's The Sopranos, Carlito's Way, Scarface, The Godfather, Donnie Brasco or Goodfellas – OPS very much digs the old school gangland pop culture. Has Mafia II been influenced by particular mobster books/films/TV shows?

DV: Mafia I was inspired by movies. It was a tribute to all those good gangster flicks, but with Mafia II I

and believable mafia styled missions that blend seamlessly with the story we are telling.

There are enough great sandbox style games out there that deliver similar gaming experiences. From a creative standpoint, we purposely chose to shy away from that design philosophy to create a more unique, gangster, story-driven experience.

"EVER IF WE WARTED TO BE MORE ACCURATE THAN WE ARE NOW, I DOUBT IT'S POSSIBLE..."

wanted to stand on my own feet, so the story is more inspired by real events and real gangsters. I read a lot of nonfiction this time around.

But if I was forced to choose one movie that had an influence on *Mafia II*, it has to be *Goodfellas*. It's one of the best gangster movies of all time and that too is based on true events.

OPS: Will Mafia II make use of the SIXAXIS in some way (like "pouring someone concrete shoes" in a minigame)? And/or will you be including any co-op or adversarial multiplayer modes this time?

DV: We are still experimenting with ideas for the SIXAXIS controller, so

it's too early to tell if and how it will

OPS: We noticed that the trailer had some very authentic 1950s music ('Oh Marie' by Louis Prima). Can you tell us about the degree of detail you guys went to when creating the look and feel of the

DV: Capturing the look and feel of the era is incredibly important to us. We went to New York and took thousands of pictures. Lots of research went into the design of every single mission. Everything in the game has its real contemporary counterpart. We have a library of thousands of pictures of buildings, cars, machines, people, cities. Even if we wanted to be more accurate than we are now, I doubt it's possible.

OPS: How big is the environment of Empire city? How many types of cars are there for an enterprising pizano to get across town in? Are there other vehicles?

DV: Empire City is much bigger than Lost Heaven (the city featured in *Mafia I*) and this time there is bigger variety



HISHWAY TO THE CALL CONTROLL OF THE CALL CONTROLL O

WORDS: ADAM MATHEW

ooking back, the movie
Top Gun was an intensely
educational experience.
Firstly it taught us that if
you're in the Bowlo on a
Saturday night and a mate
attempts a strafing run on a
hen's party – you never, ever leave your
wingman. Secondly, if you're ever faced
with a 'multiple bogey situation', you
should systematically isolate each one
and give them the flick – an important
rule that is perfectly interchangeable
between targeting aircraft and effective
nasal hygiene...

Seriously though, who among
us can honestly say they
haven't watched Top
Gun an insane

amount of times and have become completely taken in by the cavalier, high flying, cheeseball American antics of Tom Cruise's character Lieutenant Pete Mitchell a.k.a 'Mayerick'. Questionable acting aside, pretty every single manchild of the eighties was wowed stupid by the crazy dogfighting scenes depicted in the movie; including it seems, the big wigs in Ubisoft, because they've put their immensely talented Romanian studio behind the control stick of a brand new flight sim IP - Tom Clancy's HAWX. Now, before anybody can get overly excited or confused here, this game has bugger all to do with the aforementioned eighties movie, and although the phrase 'hawx' may sound similar to the guttural noise you make in the back of your throat before you get your spit on - it's so much more than that. Speaking

plainly, it is the most

impressive and innovative flight based videogames we've seen in years, Ace Combat series included.

I FEEL THE NEED - THE NEED... FOR SPEED...

Unlike the Hollywood wankery depicted in *Top Gun*, *HAWX* will lean much closer to the realism depicted in the other Tom Clancy franchises. This means that there's none of that 'defend the fictitious country of Fakemeria, from the dastardly, invading Imaginarian Air Force'

crap to be found.

Instead, the plot kicks off in 2012 where you're an enlisted pilot on your very last mission for the US military – which, coincidentally happens to be a bombing run in New Mexico to provide air support for Scott Mitchell from *GRAW* 2. Once this introductory mission wraps itself up your character decides to try his luck working for a PMC (private military company), a move that will offer him greater pay, access to a multitude of aircraft, and being a mercenary he's no



FEATURE // TOM CLANY'S HAWX

longer bound by the usual constraints of the US military (that is, saying oorah way too much and the fragile concept of morality).

HAWX promises to feature 50 real world aircraft, which will be used to fly a variety of mission types whether it's air superiority, close air support for infantry units, escorts, bombing runs, or infiltration beneath enemy radar. From what we could identify the game showed footage of an A-10, a Rafale, a FA/18 Hornet, F-14 Tomcats, Joint Strike Fighters, F-22s, F16s, and an Su-27 among others. Trust us, we pleaded with our Ubisoft minders to give us a fuller list but they told us that the information was classified - and they could tell us, but then they'd have to kill us. Interestingly enough, one of the Belgian journalists boldly took them up on this offer, had the plane list whispered into his ear, and was escorted from the room by beefy security personnel - we don't

know what they told him, but he had a massive grin on his face before he died.

THERE WERE BOGEYS LIKE FIREFLIES ALL OVER THE SKY...

Being set in the future, all the aircraft in HAWX have been retroactively fitted with an Enhanced Reality System (ERS) which is a computer aid that offers the pilot an unprecedented degree of control over his plane. With ERS in 'Tactical On' mode your plane is basically in a 'safe mode' (well, 'safeish' mode); with a press of a button you can request a calculated firing solution on an enemy, or an escape vector from an incoming heatseeker missile. These solutions appear as large gate-like images on your HUD which must be flown through in sequence to either get behind vour intended victim or escape certain missile death. Tactical On has some drawbacks however, the computer calculations require large amounts of computing power which is

allotted by a slowly replenishing energy meter that renders the system unusable if it's empty. When this happens, you'll either have to wait for it to come online again or 'do some of that piloting shit'.

Switching into 'Tactical Off' mode is a surprisingly entertaining experience; your view switches to a dogfighting external camera that contextually locks onto any nearby threat and your jet is no longer constrained by the usual safety systems that limit the engine's maximum speed and thus it's maneuverability. Basically Tactical Off means that you can fly by instinct rather than technology by turning and burning to get out of tricky situations and outfly your enemies. However, there is a downside to all this acrobatical lunacy; because while you now have access to drift-like maneuvers, which can have the same strategic effect as the 'we'll hit the brakes and he'll fly right by' scene in Top Gun - if you push the envelope too much you'll be in mortal danger of stalling your ride like an L plater.

Needless to say, this is the quickest way to end up a cooked Goose.

The concept of the ERS system is a welcome and surprising twist on the usual flight game design where you hardly ever see your plane in an external view, and you mindlessly line up your very distant enemies in a targeting box and fire-and-forget. There seems to be a very sensible balance here too with both the Tactical On/Off modes having inherent vulnerabilities that force you to adapt and strategise as the battle gains intensity.

GOODNESS GRACIOUS, GREAT BALLS OF FIRE!

Looking across at the screens, you probably don't need us to tell you that the game is enough to make anybodies eyeballs water with primal lust. Imagine if you will, these visuals blistering along at 6ofps with exaggerated afterburner flames, spider webs of missile smoke criss-crossing the stratosphere, above







"ROGER THAT BIG BIRD, I'M GOING IN..."

Borrowing a feature from their upcoming strategy game EndWar, if you plug in a microphone will support the use of voice commands. Details are still a little sketchy but from what we could gather Ubisoft Romania has plans to allow weapon selection, ERS mode switching, and the issuing of support unit orders by just speaking them aloud. This fancy new system compliments the existing function of a microphone and headset on PS3: harassing your unworthy competition in multiplayer by questioning their odour and such.





WHAT WE WANT:

KENNY LOGGINS:

'Highway to the Dangerzone'. It'd be criminal not to include this song, or at least the option to custom soundtrack it into the proceedings.



SINGSTAR MINIGAME:

Get unlockables if you can bust out 'You've Lost that Loving Feeling" in a local bar and score some carnal knowledge on the premises.



COMMUNICATING:

During multiplayer we want to bust out a four G inverted dive with a MiG 28 and give somebody the bird. Now that we think of it; there should be polaroids too.



SCREWING UP:

Rather than using a game over screen, make us pay for our mistakes by making us fly a mission as a cargo plane full of rubber dogshit out of Hong Kong.



BUZZING THE TOWER:

After a successful mission we need to celebrate by flying really fast past the air control tower and spilling people's hot beverages.

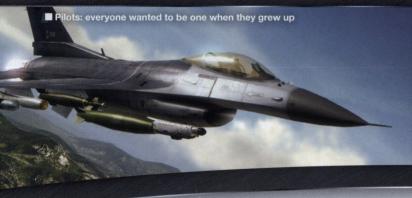


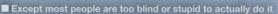
FIREFOX:

We want to fly an experimental Russian super fighter that has bad arse reverse firing missiles and has to be controlled by thinking in Russian. Da baby!











metropolitan cities with insane amounts of ground detail. We can also tell you that HAWX features some of the meatiest explosions that, like the clouds you fly though, have a super-realistic density to them. In terms of photorealism for the ground. Ubisoft Romania approached an external company Geo Eye for satellite images, the end result of which is near military grade imagery that is four times the resolution you'll see on Google Earth. Not content with this, the graphics artists have also gone through and 3D modeled every major building represented in each environment - which, in dense urban locales like Rio di Janeiro, look simply phenomenal. As yet there's no word to whether the Geo Eye satellite imagery has inadvertently captured some Brazilian hotties sunbaking. Fingers are very much crossed on that one.

Getting past the scenery, HAWX also features flashy HUD elements that do a sublime job of making you believe that you are strapped into a high tech bird of war. You're given access to the staple Tom Clancy CrossCom system which is a handy picture-in-picture way of providing you with video imagery of your commanders.

Not only can the CrossCom system keep you up to date with mission objectives, it is also a valuable tool for directing friendly forces during the conflict, whether it's ground based infantry, tanks, AWACS, jamming, or even eye-in-the-sky satellites and other fandangle orbital technology.

YOU CAN BE MY WINGMAN ANYTIME – BULLSHIT, YOU CAN BE MINE...

Plans are very much in place to make *HAWX* a multiplayer experience that

will pack more crazy dogfighting antics than disgraced gridiron player Michael Vick's backyard. For the first time ever in the air combat genre, you'll be able to play the entire solo campaign with four players via a 'jump-in' cooperative mode that comes equipped with complementary weapons and extra challenges. You heard right; you, Goose, Iceman and Slider can all fly the same sortie and work together to achieve multiple objectives – or if you're like us, you'll spend fifteen minutes trying to cut each other off and induce lethal flat spins.

In the adversarial mode, you can challenge up to 15 friends in intense dog-fighting sessions and finally settle who the best of the best is. In a system similar to *Rainbow Six Vegas 2*, winning a match will reward you with experience points to improve your skills and money to unlock more weapons. Thankfully

these rewards are completely interchangeable between both single and multi play.

All in all we left the beautiful Romanian capital of Bucharest with sky high hopes for *Tom Clancy's HAWX*. Even those among you who only have a passing interest in fighter jets and aviation should definitely take some time away from your usual staple diet of platformers, racers, and first person shooters to become utterly gobsmacked by the visuals and the sheer speed of this game.

Only time will tell how the bold invention of the EPS will be taken by the purists, and whether or not Ubisoft Romania will be able to maintain a fine balance between simulation and arcade thrills. In the meantime, we'll continue to track this baby on our OPS radar screen and we recommend that you all keep an eye on the sky...



WORDS: LUKE REILLY STORM

Mars. If you believe what the boffins are saying, we'll land a human expedition on it within the next 30 years or so. THQ, however, can have you there a lot sooner...



t's the evening after THQ's annual Gamer's Day in San Francisco, and OPS is tucked away in a French restaurant with a posse of Australian games journalists. We can't recall the name - probably something pretentious. We're currently mulling over exactly what the brown shit in our French onion soup could be and making generalisations about international press, but between extracting what may or may not be snot from our bowl of broth and poking fun at Germans one topic keeps coming back up - Red Faction: Guerrilla. More specifically, how incredible it is.

GET YOUR ASS TO MARS

We'll level with you immediately. We had real

concerns about this one. The first-person to thirdperson shift had us more than a little worried, and the fact that Red Faction 2 was somewhat of a disappointment after the (literally) groundbreaking original didn't help either. We wanted it to blow our minds, but we just weren't sure it would. We approached the demo machines with a mixture of excitement and trepidation. It was the first game we played on the night because the suspense was killing us. The verdict? Read on. It's good.

RED DAWN

Guerrilla is a total departure from the roots of the series. What once was a more-or-less conventional, linear first-person shooter has become an ambitious, open-world third-person shooter. It's a



bit like Mercenaries 2: World in Flames, in space. Mercenaries 2, to be honest, along with, say, Battlefield: Bad Company are probably Guerrilla's only competition when it comes to the immense level of destruction on offer in an open-world environment. It's probably too early to judge, but Guerrilla might just have the edge in that department.

For those of you that need a refresher, the original *Red Faction* took place on Mars, around the year 2075. With Earth running low on minerals, the Ultor Corporation has established a mining operation on Mars. All is not well, however, and atrocious living conditions,

plus a manmade disease known as The Plague (a side effect of nanotechnology research) lead to a rebellion. It was absolutely tops, and well received by critics. The sequel was a bit of a bust, a faster-paced on-rails affair set entirely on Earth that didn't live up to the standard of the original. *Guerrilla*, thankfully, marks both a return to the red planet and a return to form.

Set 50 years after the events of the original, players will assume the role of a freedom fighter with the re-established Red Faction movement and duke it out against the oppressive Earth Defence Force. Your struggle for liberation will

take you across vast tracts of Martian landscape, from the mining outpost of Parker (named, no doubt, after the hero of the first *Red Faction*) to the EDF capital city of Eos. There's been some speedy terraforming over the past half-a-century because the sky is blue, there's scattered vegetation across the windswept desert and there isn't an oxygen mask in sight. It seems like *Total Recall* crossed with *Mad Max*.

The gimmick though? Geo-Mod is back and, although Volition hasn't settled on a name for the new and improved system, this time it means business. You can destroy everything.

APPETITE FOR DESTRUCTION

It's a tad unfair we describe it as a gimmick, really. It's taken four years to perfect and it's significantly more than a token smattering of rubble. Every structure you come across can be razed – walls, communication towers, water tanks, shacks, supply warehouses, pillboxes, barracks... if you can see it, you can smash it. It's immensely satisfying. The demo segment we played through several times started us with four weapons – an assault rifle, a rocket launcher, a sack full of satchel charges

FEATURE // RED FACTION: GUERRILLA







LIFE ON MARS

Outside of Earth, Mars is really the only other planet on our Solar System that could support life. Mars has volcanoes, valleys, deserts and polar ice caps like Earth, and its rotational period and seasonal cycles are similar to those of good ol' Planet Earth.

Terraforming Mars wouldn't be cheap, and would require two major changes to the planet - building up the atmosphere and keeping it warm. The existing Martian atmosphere consists mainly of carbon dioxide, a known greenhouse gas. Once the planet began to heat (possibly with rockets full of compressed CFC - stay with us here) more CO2 would heat the atmosphere from the frozen reserves on the poles. This means that the two processes of building the atmosphere and heating it would augment one another, and make terraforming easier. It seems likely that we'll see people land on Mars in our lifetime, but living on it? Maybe not.

and a sledgehammer. All of them, except the assault rifle, could be used to completely demolish every building we came across.

And we did. Swing the sledge into a wall and chunks of concrete shatter and tumble. Pump a rocket into an open room and debris mushrooms out in every direction. Deposit a wad of satchel charges inside a building and watch as the entire structure cascades in on itself. We went nuts, and we enjoyed every second. You don't even need to destroy a building outright before it collapses - bring down enough and the stress will take care of the rest. Hairline fractures will open up, dust spilling out, and the whole thing will ome crashing down in a thick plume of grey soot and dust. With a little time (and we had quite a line behind us) you can really push the tech to its limit. Blow out a hole above you and bring down the roof around you - it's a hoot. Demolish the front and rear of a multistorey structure and watch as the upper floors teeter on the still-intact centre supports before toppling over.

Better still, we found you can even drive vehicles straight through walls and buildings – which is handy for a quick gatecrash. We also discovered a great mech, which we commandeered and promptly set about totally ruining everything. It was some kind of mining robot with great big swinging arms that chewed through concrete like warm butter. It even makes for a great, moveable tower – at any point you can hop out of the driver's seat and stand on the platform, firing away at anyone giving you grief.

We should point out that none of this destruction is scripted; it's

it! The options become vast when you're able to shape your own path. Infiltrating enemy complexes doesn't have to be a matter of fighting your way through the front door – you'd be better off barging your way directly into the building itself with your trusty sledge. Or an APC. Find the second floor filled with sharpshooters? Why risk a suicidal assault up the stairs when you can simply bring the second floor to you

"Find the second floor filled with sharpshooters? Why risk a suicidal assault up the stairs when you can simply bring the second floor to you with a few satchel charges?"

completely dynamic. Few developers have nailed this level of environmental interaction. We also ought to mention that while we had a criminal amount of fun levelling buildings purely for the sake of it, we can assure you there's a great deal of depth on account of the destruction. Want to take out a mounted gun, but you find the access door is locked? Blow a hole in the wall! Is there a barrier between you and easy access to your objective? Drive through

with a few satchel charges? It's just works so well. It's brilliant.

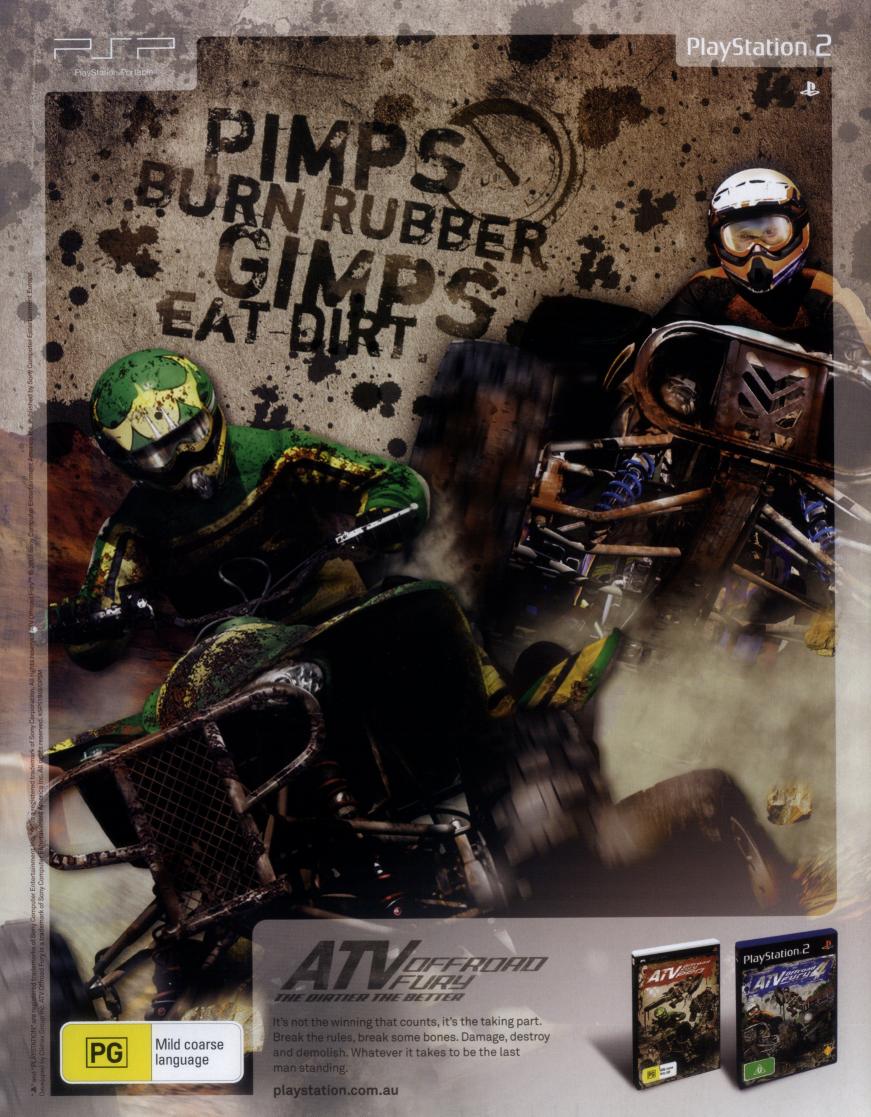
GUERRILLAS IN THE MIST

It'd be remiss of us not to discuss the feel of the game itself, especially after such a drastic shift in perspective. Fortunately, we're happy to report it's very robust. The gunplay is sound, and there's a handy and intuitive automatic snap-to-cover system in place. The

vehicle handling was surprisingly good too, especially since we found the driving physics in *Guerrilla*'s stablemate, *Saints Row 2*, a tad too sticky for our liking. *Guerrilla*'s oversized 4x4s and hulking APCs slide around the dusty roads with aplomb. Visually it's no slouch either – the screenshots really do this game justice. It's no mean feat considering the processing resources we imagine are burned through by the amazing evolution of Geo-Mod tech.

The missions we attempted on the night itself were fairly typical openworld fare – destroy this convoy, kill these punks, save these saps – but the multiple ways to tackle them made things a little more interesting. A minimap makes reaching and finding new objectives simple. We're more than confident there'll be a host of missions that really exploit the unique nature of a planet like Mars and the explosive tech Volition has spent four years creating.

Red Faction: Guerrilla is one of those rare games that exceed one's expectations, and we're really looking forward to some more hands-on time with it. A true surprise packet, you'll be hearing plenty more about this one over the coming months. One of the PS2s first great shooters finally receives the sequel it deserves.



The latest PS3 Network news, online reviews, reader online section and more!



MotorStorm 2

A genuine must see While Evolution has been candid that this trailer is pre-rendered, it certainly gives us a solid idea of the direction this undoubtedly stellar sequel is headed. We're a lookin' and we're a likin'.



GT5: Prologue

Prologue is just about worth the money, considering that vou get well over 15 hours of play (far more if you stick it out for the expensive cars). Tragically more than some full-priced games these days.



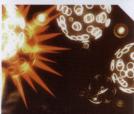
SingStar

Worth checking - to an extent. A couple of gems managed to get lost in yet another swathe of SingStar mediocrity. Billy Joel's 'We Didn't Start the Fire' is sure to entertain your dad, but that's it...



Stranglehold

A humongous monstrosity of an update that completely dwarves all other Downloadable Content packs on the market, and makes them look rather silly - 10 new maps, and 21 new playable characters!



flOw

A nifty little expansion pack to the weirdly relaxing experience that is flOw. Probably best restricted to huge fans of the original, but for those who adore this slick piece of work, download.



Wipeout HD

Check out our preview of this forthcoming title on the page opposite - but if a moving illustration this sharp and smooth update is required, hop onto the store and download the trailer online

CHECK OUT... VEWS

DOUBLE TROUBLE

ince we last spoke there's been an epic amount of online 'updatage', resulting in more than a few random curse words being cast in the direction of our trusty PS3. But regardless of the wait, both these minor updates are 'for your own good', as our dear old mum used to say.

They mostly revolve around video playback, with movie files over 2GB now playable, providing they're in the correct format. In addition, wmv files (which the PS3 previously spat out like seeds in watermelon) are now playable - many of the longstanding issues with other avis have also been ironed out. After trying out a couple of files that failed to work previously, we found ourselves pretty satisfied with the latest update.

all those other files we totally didn't illegally download we'll be straight.





OOM TOK!!

PixelJunk Monsters fans (and there had better be some of you) rejoice yet again! We reported previously that an expansion was being worked upon, and it turns out those good people at Sony were telling us the truth - how refreshing!

The expansion comes in the form of a new

entire island of all dancin', all killin', chillin' like a villain, PixelJunk Monster action. We like. The island itself is called 'Toki', and plays host to some of the most complex (and kinda random) map layouts yet.

Those familiar with the original should be keeping a beady eye on this expansion for sure.



BURNOUT PARADISE

By all accounts *Burnout Paradise* didn't exactly get a fair crack of the whip. Sandwiched inbetween the 2007 Christmas season glut (*COD4* and *AC* in

particular), and the slick hype machine for MGS4 and GTA it seems many have forgotten about Criterion's flawed masterpiece.

Run to paradise...

And this lack of popularity – the fact that Burnout Paradise isn't quite as popular online as perhaps Alex Ward and his team envisioned – is possibly the only tangible flaw in what is one of the best implemented online experiences we've seen yet. It's almost as if the grand vision for Burnout, the sheer depth of the online leaderboards, and the huge amount of modes, is hampered by the fact that not quite enough people on your (and our) friend list seem to be playing the game.

But that being said, the implementation is still spectacular, by pressing right on the d-pad at any moment players can be automatically whisked away to the magical world of online gaming, and hop into a match almost instantly – starting pretty much from the exact same point you are at on the map. The freedom and scope is almost bewildering. When you hop back out of the match you'll hardly notice, since you will be at the exact same areas as you were previously – the line between online and offline is blurred almost indiscriminately.



So finding matches with randoms is easy, and almost perfectly executed – which makes it even more of a shame that Criterion's grand vision for a huge community constantly checking to beat each other's high scores and times has been scuppered by both a strange lack of gamers and, possibly, the overwhelming popularity of *Call of Duty 4*.



LOLGASM



The Office Call of Duty

So they're a bit behind the times (playing *Call of Duty 2* instead of the supreme *COD4*) but the thought is there. The best bit? When one player confesses to choosing the Sniper Rifle on an unsuitable map and his team mate screams: "The game is over, now I'm really going to kill you!"

Watch it at: http://www.gamevideos.com/video/id/6721
Or Google: Office Call of Duty



Everybody's Golf Upskirt

If it's wrong to sneak a peek up the skirts of those cute, hyper stylised chiquitas from *Everybody's Golf*, then we don't wanna be right. This video gets up close and maybe a little too personal with Sony's latest twee golfer. A bit of an eyebrow raiser for sure.

Watch it at: http://www.gametrailers.com/player/usermovies/90544.html

Or Google: Hot Shots Golf upskirt



Pole Position

You may remember the cool real life 'space invaders' clip – this is another awesome video from the same team. This time they adapt their stop motion hi-jinxs to *Pole Position*.

Watch it at: http://www.techeblog.com/index.php/techgadget/video-stop-motion-pole-position Or Google: Stop Motion Pole Position

WIPEOUT HD

Slide, slide, slippedy slide

When it comes to off-the-rails action, you could do far worse than indulge in a little dose of WipEout. Along with Ridge Racer, WipEout has been a dependable thoroughbred in the Sony stables for a number of years now, and it's not hard to figure out why. With graphics so crisp they'll sear your retinas, bumping electro beats, gravity defying racers and tracks, there was never a lot of depth to WipEout, nor was there ever a need to be. Its simplicity had us coming back for more, and now those of you yet to experience the experience are in for a high definition treat.

Out first taste of WipEout HD was like slipping on a pair of comfy old shoes. Crazy tracks, air-braking side to side, unforgiving and rapid decelerating collisions, and of course, all the little speed boost arrows and weapons pick ups you know and love. It's all about finding that perfect line and hoping to hell you don't bump into anything along the way, which is a hard ask, as you may find yourself drifting into a wall as you lovingly gaze at



the super sexy 1080p visuals.

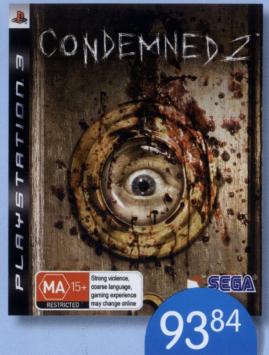
At this point our only critique is on the track designs. We'd like to see some alternate routes or shortcuts ala the *Burnout* or *SSX* series to really launch this franchise into the stratosphere. That said, it's still looking pretty damn tidy, and with the addition of head to head online action, we're getting our flipper fingers ready to smoke any opposition. Who else is up for it?





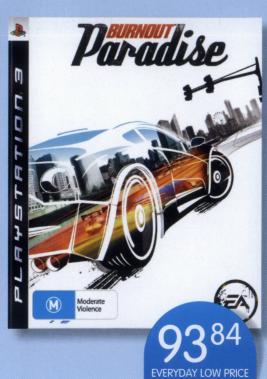
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REVIEWS

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REVIEW RATINGS

Reserved for the very worst that developers have to offer.
Essentially, anything that receives this score has no redeeming qualities whatsoever. A game receiving this score could not possibly be any worse, unless it was broken from the outset (or gave you cancer, or killed your dog). A game that should never have even survived its first pitch — as had as it pets

A terrible, terrible game. There may be one or two things about this game that work, or aren't actually broken, but they are so hopelessly outnumbered by the sheer quantity of badness that they basically cease to exist. Maybe it has a clever name, maybe the concept was sound – but virtually every single thing about it is bad beyond belief. Not worth the effort.

Very disappointing. A game with this score is fundamentally flawed in a number of extremely vital ways. There may be one or two things that could've been done somewhat worse than they have been, but for most part it's totally uninspired, boring and unappealing in every way. There are games that are worse, but there's not that many

Poor. There may be parts of this game that are vaguely fun, and it may be robust enough in a few departments, but the overall package is lacking any significant reason to stick it out. Games receiving this score may show initial promise, or sound good at first, but will be unrefined, undercooked and let down by shoddy execution and poor attention to detail.

Mediocre. In the strictest terms, 50% is a pass – just. Unfortunately, a game receiving this score will have had just as many things go wrong with it as go right, and that really isn't enough to succeed. A game receiving this score will probably be entertaining in parts without excelling anywhere, yet equally sub-par in others without being outright awful.

Decent enough, although still lacking a certain something. A game receiving this score will be sound, but will have some fairly glaring faults and your interest will probably wane pretty quickly. It will have a number of limitations that will probably turn off more than a few gamers, but will get just enough right to keep dedicated fans of the genre ploughing through.

Good. A robust, fun game that's well worth a look. although will only rarely amaze. A game receiving this score will have more or less accomplished nearly all it set out to do in a decent fashion, but it will have some noticeable problems that prevent it from being as good as it could be. Nevertheless, they generally won't ruin the overall gaming experience.

Great. A game receiving this score comes highly recommended. A combination of some odd issues, minor problems or a lack of innovation may hamper it somewhat, but the overall impression it leaves it very positive. Very entertaining, very satisfying and you woudin't hesitate to recommend it to others. Well ahead of the pack in most departments.

Excellent.
Outstanding in almost every way.
Some negligible blemishes will just keep it from being held aloft as a true masterpiece, but it is very likely the best in its field.
Most elements of this game will be truly remarkable and you'll be hard-pressed to find too many other games of greater quality. An astonishing game that leaves all but the very best behind.

Incredible. Everything went right during the creation of this game. A game receiving a perfect 10 does not necessarily mean it is perfect. likely just teasingly close, but to reserve 10s for THE perfect game is pointless. Instead, a 10 represents a game of gobsmacking brilliance, a game that stands high above the rest and a game that you cannot afford to ignore. A masterpiece.

THE OPS AWARDS



The Gold Award

is a rare gem and only to be given to games that score that magic 10/10. This score indicates gaming of simply incredible quality!

PlayStation SILVER AWARD 9/10

The Silver Award

is for games that receive 9/10. If you see this, it's a sign of star quality, indicating that you should buy this game now!

PlayStation BRONZE AWARD 8/10

The Bronze Award

is for games that score 8/10. These games are highly recommended and are 100% guaranteed to satisfy.



INSIDE...



GRAND THEFT AUTO IV

Un-frickin-believable - page 74



ARMY OF TWO

They're just good friends... honest! - page 80



TURNING POINT: FALL OF LIBERTY

The great idea is only step one of the process - page 82

PS3 PS2 PSP

- RELEASE: APRIL 2008 DEVELOPER: ROCKSTAR NORTH
- DISTRIBUTOR: BOCKSTAR
- PRICE: \$119.95
- HD: 720p
- WEB: www.rockstargames.com

■ "The roof, the roof = I mean the cars the cars, the cars are on fire..."

■ BACK STORY: The king is back, with the long awaited Grand Theft Auto IV. After blowing the gaming world to shreds in the last generation, Rockstar is all set to do the exact same thing all



Worth the wait? Hell yes...

et's put it out there from the very beginning, from the first sentence: Grand Theft Auto IV might just be the best game in the series, a game eons ahead of the competition. In some ways, many ways even, we almost feel sorry for every other game that has the misfortune of being released after it. We're talking about a game so ahead of its time that we're having difficulty explaining it to ourselves, let alone putting it on print.

Remember that one kid in class that towered above the rest, who had a powerful thatch of man-hair on his chest before anyone even understood what that really meant?

That's Grand Theft Auto IV.

How about that girl who had a pendulous pair of sweater puppets attached to her chest while the rest of the girls were still playing hop scotch in training bras?

That's Grand Theft Auto IV.

This is a game that is leaps and bounds ahead of its peers, a game roughly about two or three years ahead of the curve. GTAIV's voice has broken into a booming bellow that spells doom for every game unfortunate enough to follow it. Loud and clear, above the squeaking adolescent voices that make

up the rest of the industry, GTAIV's message is clear: "Move over ladies - daddy's back.

Daddy is back.

THE LEAP OF FAITH

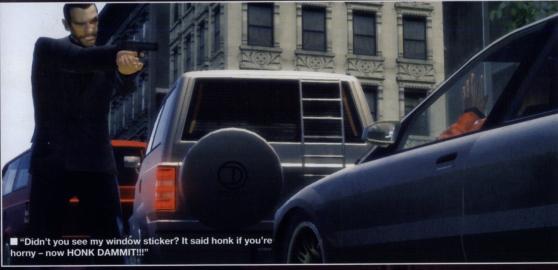
The last major step forward for the GTA franchise was undoubtedly the huge leap into the third dimension. Gamers imploded and brains were thoroughly fried when gamers got a sense of the scope and scale of Rockstar's living, breathing 3D city - with realistic day/ night cycles and the almost infinite sense of freedom that came from being











able to do whatever you liked, was a genuine revelation.

So what now - how does one top that dimensional leap? Rockstar claimed it wanted GTAIV to be just as big a move forward as its predecessor was. Unless Rockstar decides to build a flux capacitor and tear the timespace continuum a new arsehole, it probably won't be traversing the fourth dimension any time soon. So how in the bluest of blue hells can Rockstar make GTAIV as big a jump forward as its third iteration?

Well, believe us when we say that, somehow, Rockstar North has managed it. Grand Theft Auto IV is as bold a move forward as GTAIII ever was. But describing the whys and wherefores of this leap is the difficult part. It's a major cop out, but when you play it, you'll understand.

NEW JACK CITY

GTAIV's leap essentially comes from depth. You could say previous GTAs suffered from a perennial lack of depth. Yes, San Andreas featured a

State-sized sandbox for you to play in, but the gameplay itself always seemed thinly spread, almost as if the gameplay mechanics couldn't match Rockstar's colossal ambition. The cities were large, but could feel empty.

Grand Theft Auto IV, however, suffers no such issues. Liberty City is teeming with life, but more importantly the life within the city rings true. No longer do you feel like the sole inhabitant of an environment inhabited by drones - there's a real sense that the world could exist without your







"Our first trip to Algonquin rendered us almost childlike, gawking out the taxi window as we saw the high rises, the moon sparkling off the river, full of that tangible sense of wonder..."

presence; that you're ultimately part of something bigger.

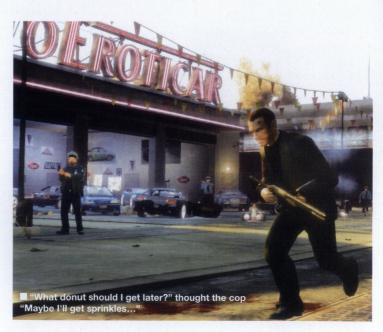
Examples? Police arresting others for their trespasses as you scoot past in a stolen vehicle, sitting in a taxi cab watching two pedestrians duke it out on the street over some random issue, upcoming rappers in the projects bragging over their new record deal, buskers tooting their horn on street corners, homeless people eking out an existence underneath the towering bridges. No longer are you the sole source of personality and vice in the city, merely a small part of it – and it's a simultaneously humbling and awe-inspiring feeling.

The city itself is breathtaking, not necessarily in the texture work, but the scale of it all. Sitting inside a cab and simply taking in the sights is an inspiring experience in itself. Our first trip to Algonquin rendered us almost childlike, gawking out the

taxi window as we saw the high rises, the moon sparkling off the river, full of that tangible sense of wonder that arises when you visit a large city for the first time. For that feeling to exist within a video game setting is a stellar achievement to say the least.

NIKO

At the centre of it all is Niko, one of the most intriguing and charismatic protagonists in recent gaming history. After the first *GTAIV* trailer was released the world could have been forgiven for its initial, "WTF BORAT!?" reaction, but after playing through the game we wouldn't have it any other way. The swagger in Niko's style is evident from the moment he takes his first step in Liberty City – and that badass bravado compounds throughout the game to the point where you ultimately step back and say: Niko may just be the most



compelling lead in gaming history.

Niko's world is accessed in the most modern of ways, via his mobile phone, resulting in a paradox of a HUD that, as opposed to rudely removing you from the game world, actually immerses you even further into its wily clutches. At the beginning of *GTAIV* your only contact is your cousin Roman, but by the end you'll have an entire network of contacts that can contact you at any time – for a mission, a casual death threat or two, or possibly just to go out on the piss.

So, in a sense, *GTAIV* goes outside the realm of its sandbox, criminal roots and really extends itself, becoming more of a 'city life' simulator. You could be in the midst of a mission, stalking your prey inside a grimy project building, and your phone may

just randomly go off – a female friend looking for a second date, or a buddy looking to shoot some pool.

You must decide whether or not to take that call, a decision that has some very real consequences within the game world – if you don't return your girlfriend's call she'll be far less likely to go out with you again, and you sure as hell won't be getting lucky next time round.

And this is just scratching the surface. *GTA* is, without a single shadow of a doubt, the most ambitious video game project ever undertaken – the fact that they've pulled it off is nothing short of miraculous.

EUPHORIC

Then we get to the Euphoria engine – which is a whole different ballgame.

From the simplest of movements (the way Niko sways when he turns into corners when running) to the most complicated (the resulting carnage from shoving a rocket up the arse of a team of goons) every movement rings true. And while these may seem like minor details, the difference this makes to the feel of the game is immeasurable.

Let's put it all together for a second: if you place a character, whose movements feel and look right into a brilliantly designed world that simultaneously reacts to, and is independent of, that character, with NPCs, whose reactions to your choices as a player make perfect sense within that world, then absolutely everything you do within that scenario becomes a joyous act of discovery – to the extent

MULTIPLAYER MADNESS

And the multiplayer... oh, the multiplayer! So awesome. Believe it or not, as opposed to creating new self-contained multiplayer maps, Rockstar has placed the multiplayer segment of *GTAIV* within Liberty City itself. You can isolate certain parts of the city, or have the action take place across the entire city! We got the chance to check out some of *GTAS* 14 brand new modes.



TEAM DEATHMATCH

Exactly what it says on the tin, except the object of deathmatch is to collect cash, as opposed to racking up kills. You get monetary rewards for killing the opposing team, but there are other ways of collecting the cold hard lucre...



COPS AND CROOKS

One team plays the crooks, and one plays the cops. The crooks must get to a behicle at some point in Liberty City, while the coppers have to stop them. The cops have the crooks on radar, but not the location, vice versa for the crooks.



TEAM MAFIYA WORK

No it's not a spelling mistake – get off our backs, jeez! This is mission-based team game that takes place across the entire city. You get a call informing you of your mission, and players must rush to the location and get busy. Absolutely chaotic.



GTA RACE

A basic race across a specified part of the city, but made incredibly fun due to the awesome physics of the vehicles. Your car is guaranteed to explode at least once, so you can shoot your adversaries from their vehicle on foot if you so desire.



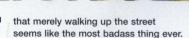




NEXT LEVEL

GTA has easily the most cohesive story in the series - combining the humour found in previous iterations with a new found grime and realism. We won't say too much about the specifics, but the voice acting and the character models themselves really bring a whole new level of storytelling to the franchise. Trust us, you'll be blown away.





■ "Nice goatee..." "Thanks, your des stubble is coming along nicely"

And when you combine this feeling with more complicated things - like shooting someone point blank in the face, robbing a bank with your crew, or rushing away from the scene of the crime in a speedboat - well, now you're getting an idea of why GTAIV is such a huge leap ahead of its predecessors.

THE BRASS TACKS

Speaking as someone who had their fair share of issues with previous GTA games, with regards to the core gameplay mechanics - we're glad to report that, outside a few choice niggles, pretty much every problems you may have had with the GTA control system has been rectified.

GTA's notoriously crusty targeting system has been the major focus of the overhaul. Following the success of Gears of War, Rockstar must have been mightily tempted to just rip off its cover system and 'over-the-shoulder' shooting style, but it hasn't - and the result is a cover system and aiming system that feels familiar, but is light years ahead of previous GTAs.

And while it's difficult to pin down exactly what aspects of driving have been changed, the end result is as clear as a bell: it simply feels better. Steering isn't anywhere near as clumsy, the damage models have been cranked up several notches, and each vehicle feels noticeably different.

Some of the traditional GTA issues do surface - the lock on system can be temperamental, and the driving camera can often frustrate (especially during

the frantic 'three point turn to escape the cops') but they seem like minor complaints consider the gargantuan effort that has gone into tweaking almost all the major issues previous GTAs suffered from.

Um I've forgotten our secret handshake...

"What, already! You're no longer a member of team awesome, man. You're OUT"

The frame rate is probably the game's only significant flaw. It rarely impacts gameplay in the same way Assassin's Creed did, but isn't exactly butter smooth either. At high speeds, with a plethora of cops in tow, it can often become downright sluggish, chugging along during some of the more intense gunfights.

But in many ways it's testament to the sheer bravado and ambition of Rockstar, Grand Theft Auto IV pushes next gen hardware to breaking point with a game that's almost too good to be true. It's a game that's every bit as

ground breaking as GTAIII was, but in many ways even its predecessor is a limp comparison.

Because essentially, no game has come close to creating a world anything like Liberty City - a fully realised environment that is so consistent, vet so in-depth; a gargantuan, sprawling city-scape that still somehow manages to indulge in the little things and make every single inch of game space worth exploring. You would have to go back to the N64 and The Ocarina of Time (routinely

named as the best game ever made) to find a game that was so advanced for its time, so ahead of the pack in that one respect.

And Grand Theft Auto IV, without a single shadow of a doubt, deserves to be mentioned in same breath as that classic. It's a game that 'ten out of ten' was designed for - a game that takes your rising, constantly spiralling expectations and vapourises them with a product so sublime that you'll tell your grandkids about it.

All time. - Mark Serrels

PROS:

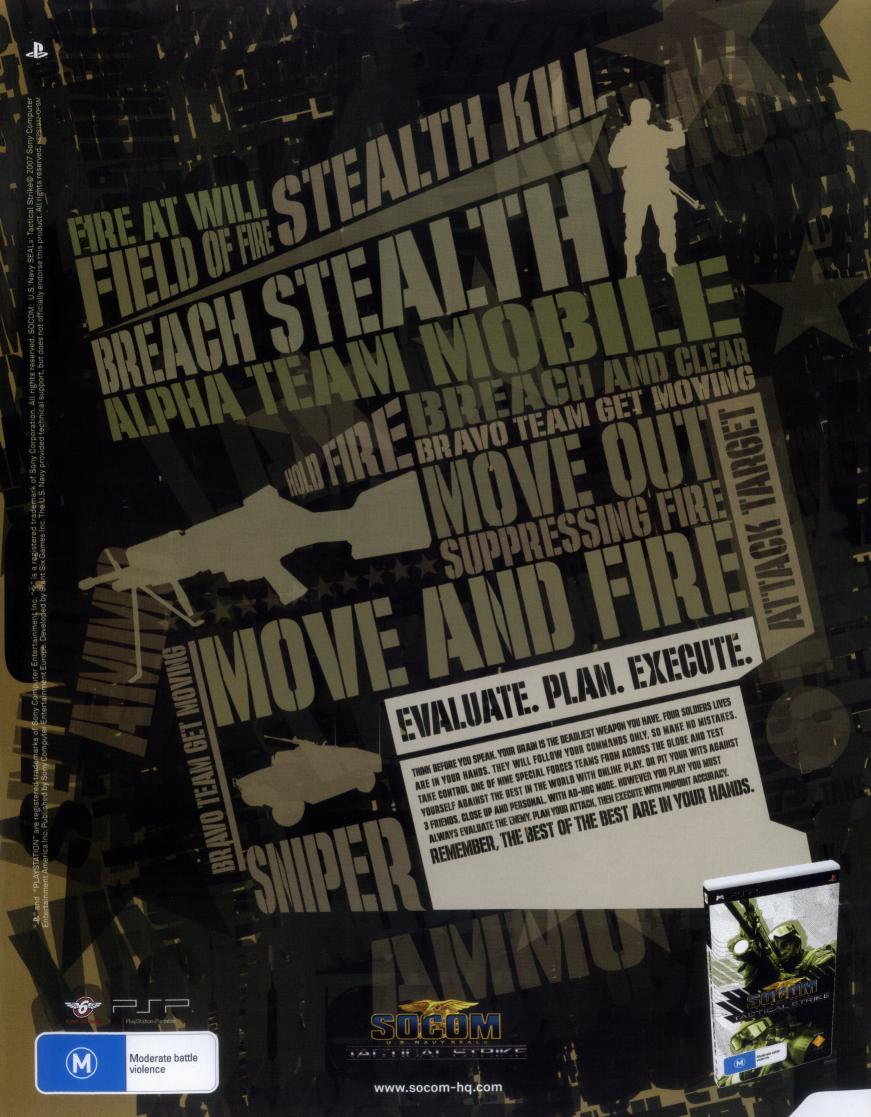
Incredibly rich world Huge leap for gaming

CONS:

Some graphical niggles Frame rate can clunk

The scope and scale of GTAIV is beyond anything gaming has ever had to offer.





PS3 PS2 PSP REVIEW

- RELEASE: NOW
 DEVELOPER: EA MONTREAL
 DISTRIBUTOR: EA

- PRICE: \$99.95 HD: 720p

■ BACK STORY: Army of Two has undergone several changes while kicking back in the pre-release pipeline. Notably the CPR mini game that featured both characters pressing a set number of buttons in time didn't make it into the retail release.



ARMY OF TWO

A pair of angry manchops save the world... for cash

two-man tag team tour de boom, Army of Two shows that a game needn't be brilliant if it comes out at the right time. Co-operative games have been the 'it' girl of the season and EA's latest has wisely positioned itself as the defining panty-less pictorial. That's not to say it lives purely on its marketing sorcery - on its own merits it's a robust game of 'bullet-hole the bad guy' made for two smoking guns. There's nothing wrong with that, Problem is Army of Two plays it safe in its overall execution.

Not so restrained is the topical storyline. Like MGS4 and Haze, Army of Two concerns itself with the privatisation of military might. The game's two brickmunching leads, Tyson and Rios, are ex

army commandos recruited into the SSC, a leading Private Military Corporation (PMC) who outsource muscle to the US for a lot of zeroes. As the war of ideas on PMCs rages, Tyson and Rios find themselves set up and marked for death as they're sucked into a globe-hopping conspiracy. Yes, it's B-grade fluff, the sort of story Wesley Snipes or Steven Seagal headline regularly. But so what? This isn't literature appreciation class, this is a blood-spraying video game packed with brutes who wear vandalised hockey masks as they puncture their enemies with hellfire lead. Could it have been better? Absolutely. Will anyone care? No.

Apart from the story, what Army of Two bothers to do, it does well. As the

name suggests each mission sees you team up with either the Al or a buddy to scramble through a third-person blastathon. Unlike the popcorn story, the game migrates over to the realm of reality when the bullets start flying. Cover is essential in Army of Two. Mid melee the amount of fire darting around you is akin to being trapped in a chick's clothing shop during the January sales. It's madness. The only way to survive is to keep your head down and use the coverand-shoot system.

Like in Uncharted, the combat is all about cringing behind objects and popping out to spray lead at your enemies. While a few games have used a similar system before, Army of Two's stab





"Is it more satisfying than a hot tub full of cheerleaders? It gets close."

is the most efficient yet as it seamlessly blends with the game's other innovation.

It's called aggro! This is all about manipulating the AI to enhance the whole "I'll draw their fire while you swing around and wedgie them from the rear" mechanic. One player bunkers down and fires away like an emo college kid to build up aggro and draw enemy attention, while the second player goes for a flanking run. It's the stock standard move in Army of Two's playbook and is necessary if you want to get past some of the heavily armoured enemies and big cheese terrorists. In fact, whip up enough aggro and you'll be able to engage Overkill mode. Here, the aggressor pimps himself into a 'double-the-damage tank on legs' while the support player turns invisible and skanks around breaking backs. Is

it more satisfying than a hot tub full of cheerleaders? It gets close.

Unfortunately that's as deep as Army of Two gets. While we have no problem with simple games, we do have beef with wasted potential. We're not sure if it was a case of the limitations of having co-op so tightly integrated into the game, but the levels in Army of Two are lethargically linear. It's an odd thing to mope about in a game that looks as sharp and attractive as this one, but it feels entirely on rails. Interactivity is weak too - sure there are a few explosive barrels to shoot, but other than that everything else is bolted down and lifeless. For a game that wallows in hurricanes of fiery bullets the levels needed to take a page out of Stranglehold and go for more interactivity.

More annoying still is that materials

don't behave as they should. It's become the norm in most games that if an enemy is cowering behind a wooden crate you can still pepper them with an AK-47. That's not the case in Army of Two where every loose piece of anything suddenly has the atomic composition of titanium. Assigning materials their due qualities would also have generated more strategy to the title - an element that would've given the repetitive fire fights a boost.

It's also clear EA didn't quite capitalise on the co-op angle as much as they should have. Apart from some cool hovercraft and parachuting moments where one player drives and the other shoots, there needed to be more interesting levels, boss fights, and objectives to make the game seem like more than an interconnected bunch of shoot outs.

No, Army of Two is not perfect, but as we mentioned at the start of the review it's a case of it being good enough at the right time. As a single-player game it can't match the richness of Call of Duty 4, but along with Rainbow Six Vegas 2 it's the only way to score some solid online co-op loving. If you've got a buddy who's keen to jump on the wagon with you, buy it without hesitation. - James Ellis

BACK TO BACK BOOM TIME

What happens when you're part of a two-man death squad but you get surrounded from all sides by insane terrorists out to kill you like disco? Just go 'back to back' and everything will work out. At least that's what happens in Army of Two. At scripted points in the game time slows down and you and your gun buddy get inundated by charging gunmen as you both swivel on the spot amassing a higher body count than heart disease. Hey - don't knock it - the technique might just save your life one day buddy...



PROS:

- Best co-op game out.
- Characters are a hoot

CONS:

- Elementary level design
- Meeded more variety

VERDICT Near enough is good enough. Solid co-op thrills make up for wasted potential.

- RELEASE: NOW
 DEVELOPER: CODEMASTERS
 DISTRIBUTOR: ATARI

- HD: 720p

■ BACK STORY: Spark Unlimited, founded by former developers from the Medal of Honor franchise, are best known for the top-notch Call of Duty: Finest Hour for PS2. The company is wholly owned by employees, so it's a shame this game sucks.

TURNING POINT: FALL OF LIBERTY

Willkommin to Amerika

t's been a while since we've been so looking forward to a game's release, and been so bitterly disappointed after playing it. Turning Point: Fall of Liberty takes you from ecstasy to agony within the first few minutes, and it doesn't get much better the further you progress through it. Now you guys know it's not like us to just tag and bag a game, just for the heck of it, but this reminded us of our high school report cards. You know, the one where your teacher remarked "never lived up to his full potential" and "needs to focus more". Trips down memory lane aside, this doesn't even come close to what we were expecting. Read on to find out why.

The Ecstasy. In 1931 Winston Churchill was brushed by a taxi leaving him with a limp for the rest of his natural life. But what if it didn't just brush him? What if it sent him on a trip to the Pearly

Gates? There'd be no rousing speeches. no call to arms, no rallying of Allied Forces. The end result? Goose-steppers in ze Whitehouse. That's right, ze Germans invade the US of A. It's a genius concept, and the idea alone had us salivating. It put a new slant on the fading WWII genre, and could have been a killer IP if it wasn't so shonkily put together.

The agony. Where to begin? Half arsed really doesn't even begin to describe it. Your basic movement feels stunted and clunky, with a lot of glitchy oh-crap-l'm-stuck moments that really detract from game play and tend to piss you off after a while. There are several interactive actions like climbing ladders (with **()** or climbing over objects (with (a). Why bother separating the two and just have a uniform action button? We're big fans of simple control systems that enhance the immersive experience, rather than detract from it.

Don't get us started on the weapons fire. Most guns have serious recoil, almost to the point where you can't get several shots off at the same Kraut. Then using to target is almost useless, as the pronounced muzzle flash obscures your crosshair, and you don't know if you've axed the bad guys or not. Enemy Al is all over the shop, and your allies don't seem to do anything other than get shot. Graphically, there's nothing noteworthy to report. Character models are fairly simplistic by today's standards, and the overall look is a little grainy.

We loved the concept so damn much, and really didn't want to slam it, but the execution was shoddy in almost every aspect. A couple more months on the drawing board may have saved it, but as it stands now, it is a mere shell of what it could have been. - Dave Kozicki

KRAUT KEVLAR

One redeeming aspect of Turning Point was the human shield aspect. Sneaking up behind any enemy Kraut and hitting (8) allows you to grapple with your enemy. You then hit the D-pad to choose the type of kill (environmental to throw them off a building, etc.), but you can also drag them along as a bullet-proof vest and let them soak up enemy fire. We've always said that Nazis make damn fine Keylar!



INFO BYTE

For an alternate history angle that kicks serious arse, try the PS2 classic Freedom Fighters instead





■ "Deka deka deka" "How many times do I have to tell you 't have to make the noise with real guns"

- Killing Nazis: always cool
- Brilliant idea...

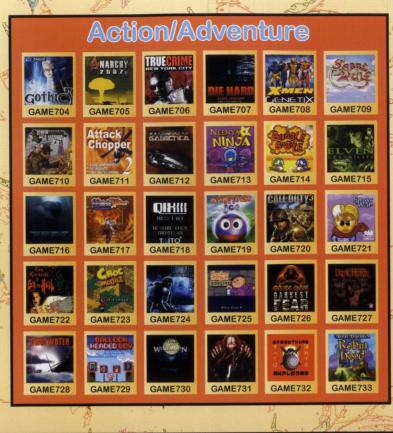
- ...very poorly executed
- What's the opposite of fun??

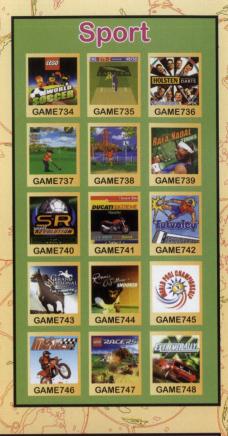
ERDICT Schelsse from start to finish. Such a great concept, such a shame...





GAME703









TEXT CODE TO 191 623

Example
TXT GAME701
TO 191 623*

* You will be charged \$0.55 for every message sent to 191 623 and \$6.60 for each game purchased. No game content provided after 9:00am AEST on 30.05.08. Your operator may charge for data transactions according to your service agreement. Service is subject to GPRS coverage, handset compatibility & network availability. Handset must be WAP & GPRS enabled. Under 15 you need the account holder's permission. Full terms, conditions & handset compatibility at www.mad4games.com.au/tandcs/opsmo608.html. You will receive marketing messages via SMS. Help at www.mad4games.com.au, info@mad4games.com.au or 1300 854 244. Available on Australian networks: Telstra, Optus, Vodafone & Virgin Mobile.

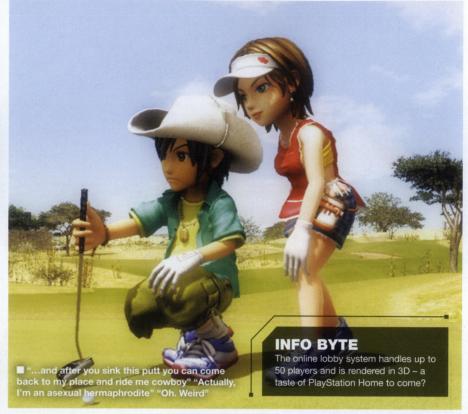
PS3 PS2 PSP

- GENRE: SPORTS
- RELEASE: NOW DEVELOPER: CLAP HANZ
- PLAYERS: 1-4 (2-8 ONLINE)
- PRICE: \$99.95
- HD: 720p
- WEB: au.playstation.com

■ BACK STORY: The Everybody's Golf series has always well-liked as a game whose humble elements combine into something greater than the whole. When this version was released in Japan it sold 150,000 copies in its first week







EVERYBODY'S GOLF: WORLD TOUR

Everybody wants to rule the world... we mean, play golf

ho knew golf was so easy? All the people who've been playing the Everybody's Golf games for the last ten years for starters - it's just a simple matter of hitting (8), ⊗ and ⊗. Easy!

Really and truly, this game is a breeze to play. Novices will have little trouble jumping right in, and instruction manuals are entirely optional. You can play using the 'three click' method and never bother with the game's other nuances and have a great time. Or you can dig deeper and also have a great time. It's up to you.

The three clicks will, in order. start your swing, end your swing and determine how sweetly you connect with the ball. But for the series' first PS3 instalment there's a significant new tweak: Advanced Shot mode.

In Traditional mode, the first button press starts a marker moving along a gage; the second click stops it and determines your shot's power; and the third has to be timed as the marker moves through the sweet spot indicator.

Advanced shot is basically the same, but there's no gauge - you just have to watch your on-screen character. The first click starts a swing; the second stops it (there's a blink of light as you pass halfway and a 'ghost' image of your club at full swing to help you gauge where you're at); and the third has to be timed carefully as a circle zeroes in on

the ball to indicate a precise hit.

And that's it! You can manually select your clubs, of course, and add top- or back-spin, hook or slice to your shot. This gives you quite a deal of control over your shots but best of all, you don't necessarily need to use it to get good results.

In keeping with the game's 'arcadey' feel, the graphics and sound are not so much cutesy as charming, with crowds politely clapping and the game encouraging you whenever you make a particularly good shot. It all looks great, incidentally, with plenty of detail on the courses and perfectly-judged character animations.

As you play through the events (spread over six courses with 15

playable characters and seven caddies) you'll earn extra outfits, abilities and equipment, giving the game a degree of customisation, though it's all pretty lightweight. We'd love to see these options expanded - which is surely a no-brainer, with three new characters and one new course already available for download.

The multiplayer options include simultaneous four-player rounds locally (eight players online), with 50-player online tournaments also on offer. The lobby system is rendered in 3D, and you can walk around and chat to other players before hitting the links. If this is a taste of what PlayStation Home might offer, we can see the potential already. ♣ Michael Butler



Could do with more courses and customisation...

HOLE IN ONE

Known as Minna no Golf in Japan

and Hot Shots Golf in the US, the

Everybody's Golf series began

on the original PlayStation, way

back in 1997. This PS3 version is

the fifth in the main sequence of

games: there have also been two

PSP versions and two Japan-only

PSP versions. The first of these is

GPS-enabled and allows you to

play on real-world golf courses;

sponsored by Coke, given away

as a promotional prize with Coke-

the second is a rare version

labelled PSPs.

VERDICT Continues the series' fine tuned balance between accessibility and depth.

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PS3 PS2 PSP

- RELEASE: NOW
- DEVELOPER: SIERRA **DISTRIBUTOR: VIVEND**
- PLAYERS: 1-2 PRICE: \$49.95



SPIDERWICK CHRONICLES



Trust us, uncontrollable Brownies are a problem....

icensed games - their reputation is so bad that whenever we hear the phrase it causes our eyes to automatically roll. At least, we thought that was the cause, until an optometrist informed us that we're suffering from retina retardation from playing too many games. Anyway, Spiderwick Chronicles bucks the usual licensed game curse by offering up a decent fantasy experience that could be another page straight out of the Jumanji-esque magical book of the movie 'Arthur Spiderwick's Field Guide to the Fantastical World Around You'.

Playing as Mallory, Jared or Simon, the game is a mixture of exploration, fetch quests, and assaulting magical

beings with baseball bats - good times. There are also a number of surprisingly cool mini-games to participate in, and navigating some of the platforming sections using a 'rat-man' brownie can take a surprising degree of skill.

Graphically the game is acceptable, and the musical score from the movie has been employed and sounds fantastic. The voice acting can be a bit spotty in places - with Jared sometimes sounding like an 'Anakin Skywalker speak-and-spell'. But this does little to detract from the fact that Spiderwick Chronicles does a great job of recreating the fantasy feel of the original novels and the new movie, and it's well worth a thrash if you're a fan of either.

Adam Mathew

- Decent graphics
- Enthralling fantasy storyline

- Combat can get repetitive
- Some levels are confusing

VERDICT: A stand-up action adventure romp. Isn't necessarily a game for fairies.





■ "Oh I say! Jolly good! What a ripper, etc.

PS3 PS2 PSP REVIEW

- RELEASE: NOW
 DEVELOPER: KOJIMA
 DISTRIBUTOR: ATARI
- PLAYERS: 1-6 ■ PRICE: \$49.95 ■ GAMESHARE: YES

METAL GEAR SOLID PORTABLE

"...call me Snaaaake"

The basics are still the same, sneak here, choke this dude, hide the body, avoid detection here, rescue that dude. vou know, the usual stuff, Stealth takedowns are still a bit fiddly, but overall the controls handle quite well especially the switch between third and first person views when aiming/firing weapons.

> The big boss battles return, and you can acquire Old Snake and Raiden as you progress. The coolest addition

is undoubtedly the 'Infinity Mission' in single player. Here you go up against increasingly difficult adversaries to acquire more powerful weapons, and recruit specialised operatives.

Ultimately, it's not quite the most complete MGS experience out there, (and it's prequel, which still totally trumps this one, is a better option) but it's an affordable jump off for first timers.

■ Dave Kozicki

fter shuffling the deck in its first few forays into PSP territory, the Metal Gear franchise was looking a bit worse for wear. All that changed a year ago when Portable Ops hit our shores. Great mechanics, silky smooth looks, solid multiplayer, she had it all, the community rejoiced, and all was right with the world. So where does the seguel figure in all this? Does it raise the bar, or rest on its laurels?

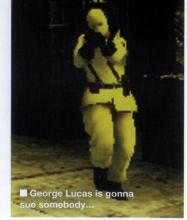
As soon as the first loading screen drops you get hit with the bonus plan. Customised characters from the original can be imported into the sequel. Simple, direct and awesome for those Gear-heads out there, who had invested the time into tweaking their unit to a sharp strike force in the first outing.

- Import your unit
- Recruit over 200 soldiers!!
- No real plot to speak of
- Not a big improvement

VERDICT: More an expansion pack than a true sequel

– a leaner version of MGS Portable Ops.









FLATOUT HEAD-ON

Kentucky Fried Racing in your hands

■ PLAYERS: 1-8

■ PRICE: \$69.95 ■ GAMESHARE: YES

his one looked good on paper. Destruction Derbies on call, Dukes of Hazards-esque road racing, fatal stunt shows, and multiplayer as a pearly cherry on top sounded like a dish that'd get Paris Hilton eating. Why then are we steering you good folk away from FlatOut Head-On?

It's infected - that's why. Plagued by that damn frickin' affliction that ruins many a PSP racer, the cars of FlatOut Head-On control like concussed shopping trolleys. Obviously this isn't going to be a call-your-mamma issue when it comes to revving up for the Destruction Derbies and Carnage Races - which in turn are the redeeming sparkplugs in FlatOut's bonnet - but when you start turboing through races it's a total downer. When you factor

in a countable frame rate, the nuts and bolts of this speed-eater become brothelhouse loose.

PS3 PS2 PSP

Even the usually Fonzie stunt mode can't escape without collateral damage. For those who don't know, FlatOut's stunt modes see you fang a rocketpowered car down a track and brake to launch an unharnessed victim out vour windscreen and through fiery rings, ten pins - whatever. It's macabre, sure, but we're weird guys and we dig it. Trouble is, with such crapola controls, setting up for a record-crushing chuck is the gaming equivalent of passing gallstones.

Nope, even with snazzy Ad Hoc and party multiplayer treats, FlatOut Head-On plays like it's driving with a flat tyre.

♣ James Ellis

- Stout multiplayer support
- Destruction Derbies are fun
- CONS:
- Abominable controls
- Burnout Legends

The tight swag of modes can't bolster the snail-like controls.







- GENRE: FIRST-PERSON SHOOTER
- RELEASE: NOW
- DEVELOPER: KONAMI DISTRIBUTOR: ATAR
- PLAYERS: 1-8







CODED ARMS: CONTAGION

...ain't got no legs

f you were one of the few who played the first Coded Arms, you would agree that it didn't exactly set the world on fire. To be fair, near launch titles are rarely revolutionary or awe inspiring, and it certainly was a flawed creation. That said, it was engaging enough. The whole cyberpunk and hacking themes were cool and different, though the controls didn't quite get the job done, leaving the whole experience lacking a certain something.

Those pesky cyber-terrorists are back with their weapons of mass destruction and what not. They've distributed a virus and you're trapped in the virtual system until you destroy it. Time to give them a

royal spanking and free the virtual world from their tyranny and all that.

Coded Arms: Contagion features an impressive new arsenal of weapons both conventional and energy based, the cut scenes look fantastic, and the overall look and feel is tight, except for the hacking... which does, and always has, sucked balls. The real problem lies

with the movement via the face buttons. You'll never react as quickly as with a dual thumbsticks and it loses that tangible feeling of intensity.

We're not sure if any first-person shooter is ever really going to leave its mark on the PSP. The issue of the missing second analogue stick just cannot be avoided. - Dave Kozicki

PROS:

- Unique look
- Nice array of weapons

- Hacking sucks
- Controls frustrate

ERDICT: A solid concept executed as well as can be expected.



DVD, Blu-ray and Cinema

Time stands still in Cashback, Timothy Olyphant scores a hit with Hitman, Russell Crowe cracks the case in *American Gangster*. Jason Statham kicks off in Rogue Assassin and much, much more!



a local supermarket working the late shift - this way he can pass the time and get paid while he's at it. He meets a host of colourful characters, all of whom have their own art to dealing with the boredom associated with an eight-hour shift. Ben's, however, is far more amazing than scooter

races down the isles - he inexplicably

Sharon, who may just be the solution to his insomnia. Guy meets girl, guy draws girl with her top unbuttoned, guy gets girl. Typical stuff.

We a tad confused though, as all the gear we read on Cashback says Ben imagines himself stopping time. There's nothing about any of the scenes where he freezes time,

packed with gratuitous nudity, Cashback is a quirky yet cute romantic comedy with a real twist. Interesting characters, a wonderfully unique premise and a bevy of boobs make it a must-see.

THE BEST TIME MEDDLERS... OF ALL TIME



BILL AND TED

Two slackers travel through time in a special phone booth in order to assemble for their high school history presentation. God gave rock and roll to them



AND DOC BROWN

forward in time in a De to the wonders of the flux capacitor (it's what makes time-travel possible!)



THE TERMINATOR

The first is sent back in time to kill Sarah Connor, and the second is sent back to save We don't count the third because it's a bit shit, and



Nerdy Asian star of the current TV flavour-of-themonth, Heroes. Hiro has the ability to manipulate time in freezing it for an extended period. YADA!



ASH

He and his Oldsmobile are time portal and end up in a medieval land around

SCI-FI

ALIENS VS. PREDATOR REQUIEM (MA15+)

■ STARRING: Steven Pasquale, Reiko Avlesworth, John Ortiz

■ DIRECTOR: Colin Strause



You may be looking at the list of above actors thinking, "Who the frack are these guys?" So were we. Not to detract from the Alien vs. Predator theme, a cast of

twenty-something unknowns have been thrown in as cannon fodder between these warring extra terrestrials. It plays out like AvP versus the cast of The O.C. and is strangely satisfying watching each cast member get eviscerated. The downside is that the acting is atrocious and not a single character leaves a slight impression on the audience.

■ VERDICT: It's a real pity that the weakest link in the film was the actors. The special effects were cool, and there were some killer fight scenes, but the human aspect never got close to engaging.



DRAMA

AMERICAN GANGSTER (MA15+)

■ STARRING: Denzel Washington, Russell Crowe, Cuba Gooding, Jr., Chiwetel Ejiofor, Josh Brolin, Carla Gugino, RZA

■ DIRECTOR: Ridley Scott



Academy Award winners Denzel Washington and Russell Crowe team up with superstar director Ridley Scott for this 1970s crime epic. When his boss suddenly dies, Frank

Lucas (Washington) goes from a quiet driver to Harlem's leading black crime boss - eventually going on to dominate the drug scene in New York, above even the Mafia. Richie Roberts (Crowe), an honest cop, is on his case and once the destinies of these two men become intertwined nothing will be the same again. Inspired by a true story.

■ VERDICT: A great cast and a terrific tale, superbly told. The only real problem is the usually dependable Russell Crowe's strange habit of making an NYC cop sound Australian.



KIDS

BEE MOVIE (G)

■ STARRING: Jerry Seinfeld, Renee Zellweger, Matthew Broderick

■ DIRECTOR: Simon J. Smith



This comedy has its wings pulled off and comes hurtling to the ground with very little impact. It makes you wonder how much influence Larry David had on Seinfeld's body of work, as this

is tripe at its best/worst. A solid idea of bees suing humans for "stealing" their honey is a great one, but the end result is lacklustre with very little sting. Even a great cast of side characters, with Patrick Warburton and John Goodman sweetening the pot, do little to distract you from the substandard performance of the lead actors.

■ VERDICT: The five lines that Chris Rock's has steals the movie as the remainder slips from your memory. Seinfeld should go back and fall asleep on his bed of crisp \$1000 bills rather than throw out this sort of parbage.





DESPITE THE FACT THAT TIMOTHY OLYPHANT NAILED THE LOOK AND CHARACTER OF AGENT 47 IN HITMAN – HE ACTUALLY NEVER PLAYED ANY OF THE GAMES THEMSELVES. APPARENLY THE SCRIPT ITSELF WAS ENOUGHFOR OLYPHANT TO CREATE THE CHARACTER.

ACTION

BEOWULF (MA)

■ STARRING: Ray Winstone, Anthony

Hopkins, John Malkovich, Angelina Joile

■ DIRECTOR: Robert Zemickis



Words cannot not express what a visual treat this was, yet the biggest surprise was how much care was taken in weaving the story. The CG is as

photo realistic as you can get nowadays with each actor's animated counterpart emoting through every scene brilliantly. Hopkins is fantastic as the drunken king who fathered the beast, Malkovich is the perfect seedy little advisor planting seeds on doubt in his ear and Winstone pulls off the role of champion with great bravado and bluster. What of Angelina you ask? She's bringing sexy back, in a big way.

■ VERDICT: A brash retelling of a classic tale that looks as sexy as Megan Fox and Jessica Alba getting it on. To be honest, we pity those of you who missed out on this in 3D at the IMAX. Fantastic.



ACTION

HITMAN (MA15+)

STARRING: Timothy Olyphant,

Olga Kurylenko, Dougray Scott

■ DIRECTOR: Xavier Gens



They certainly got the 'look' and tone of Hitman in the big screen version, if not the stealth aspects. The story is some twaddle involving Prime Ministers and

doppelgangers... who cares? Just bring on the action. The notion of the assassin for hire flies out the window in favour of larger, more explosive set pieces. Olyphant grimaces through clenched jaws and handles the role of Agent 47 well enough, but Olga Kurylenko's talents are the real show stoppers and has us at full attention (and by talents, we mean jugs).

■ VERDICT: Though seriously flawed, we really tried to hate this film, but the slick direction, inventive action sequences and extreme hotness of Olga Kurylenko made it difficult to resist. Call it a guilty pleasure... and don't judge us!



ACTION

ROGUE ASSASSIN (MA15+)

■ STARRING: Jet Li, Jason Statham and Devon Aoki

■ DIRECTOR: Phillip G. Atwell



After the death of his partner, an FBI Agent (Statham) is in hot pursuit of a mysterious assassin called 'Rogue'. His name is Rogue, and he's an assassin – how do

they come up with this stuff? The chase launches the flick into tense firefights, numerous chases and the prerequisite kung fu antics. It's nice to see Li and Statham go head to head (especially with Statham's martial arts prowess, which still has not been fully utilised) and there are several interesting, if not predictable, twists along the way. The harsher tone works quite well, though the film wraps up a little quickly.

VERDICT: After their substandard team up in *The One*, we felt this may redeem the partnership. While it's not a must see, it certainly is a step in the right direction. Save it for a rainy day...

I AM LEGEND (MA15+)

DIRECTOR: Francis Lawrence

STARRING: Will Smith

Alice Braga, Dash Mihok



The first half of this movie rocks the spot, but kinda goes downhill towards an ending that will make you rip out your pubic hair in frustration. Some

truly hair raising moments almost save this one from the doldrums.

VERDICT: A wasted opportunity. Some great scenes, but a lame ending.



THE RECRUIT (M)

DIRECTOR: Roger Donaldson

STARRING: Al Pacino, Colin Farrell



A brilliant computer science student is recruited by the CIA, although he quickly realises that no one can be trusted and that nothing is what it seems.

VERDICT: A seviceable thriller.



WYATT EARP (M)

■ DIRECTOR: Lawrence Kasdan

STARRING: Kevin Costner, Dennis Quaid, Gene Hackman, David Andrews, Linden Ashby, Jeff Fahey, Joanna Going



A semi-biographical film about the life of wild west lawman Wyatt Earp. Takes you from his early years through to his later years.

VERDICT: Good, but it's no Tombstone.



WALL STREET (M)

DIRECTOR: Oliver Stone

STARRING: Michael Douglas, Charlie Sheen, Martin Sheen, Daryl Hannah



Greed is good, and so to is this movie. One of Michael Douglas's best performance and Charlie Sheen's only good performance.

VERDICT: One of the best movies about the '80s ever.





CINEMA

IRON MAN (RATING TBC)

DIRECTOR: Jon Favreau STARRING: Robert Downey, Jr., Terrence Howard, Gwyneth Paltrow, Jeff Bridges

Inen looking for someone to play the alcoholic, sex-addict philanthropist lead of Tony Stark, Jon Favreau thought he needed someone who could completely and utterly identify with the role. So who better than 'reformed' wild child Robert Downey, Jr. to get all method on our arses for? (In fact we believe he said it's Rob or no-one) Following in the footsteps of many below par superhero performances, Iron Man is looking set to outshine them all. We love the design, tone and that Favreau embraced the



old school (or "Golden Age" for fat, geeky, comic aficionados) look, as well as the super sleek modern incarnations. This is going to be so eff-ing money, and it bloody well knows it! (We just hope Gwyneth 'Mrs. Coldplay' Paltrow kicks the bucket at some point, that would make it even more awesome!) Opens May 1



COMING SOON

SPEED RACER (TBC)

STARRING: Emile Hi

Opens June 12

DON'T MESS WITH ZOHAN (TBC)

STARRING: Adam Sandler most war torn centres of the becoming... a hair stylist? Opens June 19

HANCOCK (TBC)

STARRING: Will Smith pieces. Hancock is a loser and attitude, he usually causes he attempts various "rescues"

BUZZ

The latest movie murmurs from home and abroad



THE SAINTS

Hollywood with his

Connolly will all reprise their roles modern day trio of avenging angels who deal death to the



OH BABY!

After being twice bitten on the ass by idiot cancelled both Angel has decided to give it

another go with Dollhouse. The to help them complete their missions, and then wiped clean legendary scribe is given the this intriguing story before it gets



SEE YOU IN HELL...

After messing with our heads in Pan's Labyrinth Guillermo Del Toro is bringing that, smart-

monster-bashing behemoth of another round. Hellboy II: The to our horny devil to lay the provided by chief villain, Prince



JOHNNY 5 IS ALIVE!

to be a weapon that develops a conscience after being struck by



Win a \$3,000 made-to-measure suit!

There are two sides to the American dream ... American Gangster is based on the true story of Frank Lucas, a heroin kingpin from Harlem who defied the might of the Italian mafia and became one of the biggest drug dealers in the country, and the detective who worked to bring him down.

To celebrate the release of *American Gangster*, which is available to rent or buy from May 14, BLOCKBUSTER®, in conjunction with Universal Pictures Australia, is giving you the chance to win a \$3,000 made-to-measure suit!





For entry details pick up a copy of InterAction from your local BLOCKBUSTER® store.



TIPS & CHEATS

WARHAWK **TIPS AND TACTICS**

Now listen up you maggots! It's come to our attention that some of you candy asses have yet to join the fight. What are ya, a bunch of sissies? Your mommas aren't here to wipe your behinds! Good old Sergeant Hulka is here to make you a lean mean fighting machine. So listen up and listen good you pasty-faced piles of puke. Sarge is gonna hold your hands and give you a little basic training in vehicles, weapons and tactics so no matter which side you're fighting on, you'll be of some use for the three seconds you're around before you kick the bucket. Now sound off like you've got a pair! Atten hut!

BRING ME BACK TO LIFE

Now it's no-where near as glamorous as capturing the flag, but in any game type, be it Zones, CTP, Death-match, whatever, re-spawn points are vital. Sure, you grab a coupla points for the cause, but more importantly, you can keep up the offensive. The more you take, the more you box the enemy in, and once they're down to their last few re-spawn points you can move in for the kill. Alternately, if you're on the losing side, recapturing the right point can divide the enemy forces and you can go on the offensive.



ETIQUITTE

We all know where the enemy is going to drop in, everyone has it on the map, but some of you douche bags out there just camp out at re-spawn points in a tank, and blast people as they materialise. That is super-duper Liberace gay, and we're not going to sugar coat it. Yes, we know its war, yes we understand its survival of the fittest, but at least make it a contest. Satan has the seventh tier of Hell reserved for all of you, it's unsportsmanlike and screams of a weak player who can't man up to the challenge. (Same goes for hosts who kick players out of matches for being too damn good. We're not boasting, but it has happened to us more times than you'd expect, and usually by a Seppo)





HONK IF YOU'RE HORNY

Please, please, please remember people it's all about teamwork. If you're in a tank or jeep and you see a brother or sister legging it, pull over and at least beep the horn to give them a chance to jump aboard. It's nothing but a bonus. You've got a gunner, you retake spawn points at twice the speed, and it's invaluable in Capture the Flag. If we see another tool jump into a dropship by HIMSELF we're going to neck ourselves. You can fit seven brothers in arms into that bad boy, plus the six turrets and missile launchers, and you want to run with it all on your own? Shame on you!



21:02

WATCH YOUR BACK!

The most important lesson of all, cover your mates. This is a TEAM sport. We know we're hammering the point home, but so many people just don't get it. All the info you'll ever need is displayed in the top left corner. Your team got the flag? Jump in a plane and give him some air support by knocking out those on his trail, the same works on the other end. Run down anyone with your flag, or better still, take some time out and defend. By operating in the middle of the action (offensively or defensively) you gain points quicker for assists and can often change the complexion of the battle in your favour swiftly.

IT'S ALL MINES BABY!!

These pint-sized pockets of death can really change the state of play if you use them wisely. In the air, a savvy pilot will drop a mine just as they've grabbed a power up. Most enemies don't realise until it's too late. "Hey, I'm on my last legs and really need that health... almost there... OH SNAP..." KABLAMMO! Be inventive with it, mine planes, even flags and spawn points, which is a particularly nasty turn to retake a point and you done get blowned up. One clever little scamp threw eight mines onto a jeep, jumped in and drove around our base until he ran into a group of defenders and sent them to the next re-spawn point. Genius!



HOP, SKIP AND A JUMPAs much as we all like taking to the skies and indulging in some *Top Gun* aerial antics, unless you're playing Death-match, you ain't gonna get alotta points. Get the handle on your hovering and you can use your plane to speedily hop from spawn point to point. Zip in, land, steal a point, jump back in and shoot off into the wild blue yonder. You can give your team a huge tactical advantage if you think about more than just blasting away that bandit on your tail, and take the time to look at the big picture.



DATABASE

All the games that matter on PS3!

FUTURE WATCH

The PS3 games to grab in the coming months

SAINTS ROW 2

elease: Late 2008

Sexy graphics, customisable characters and co-op play. That's it. That's all we're going to say about it. It's like GTA with a buddy. Bust caps back to back or offer sniper support from a distance. It's almost like your girlfriend and her best friend have invited you for an epic three

way - you're getting the best of both worlds. What else do you need to know? Oh, the actual game! Check out our preview on page 32.

MERCENARIES 2: WORLD IN **FLAMES**

Release: Late 2008 You dig an open world, massive destruction, the gun for hire philosophy and the smell of napalm in the morning? How about jacking Apache 'copters mid air, tearing up the streets in muscle cars, or

lobbing a couple grenades into a tank, and, oh, yeah, we almost forgot, you get to blow shit up. Seriously, where do we sign up?

SOUL CALIBUR IV

Release: Late 2008

It's got the best breast physics any red-blooded male could ask for, an eclectic group of warriors each with their own unique weapons and fighting style, it's probably the most balanced fight out there, and... oh who cares, YOU GET TO

PLAY AS FRICKIN' DARTH VADER!!!! Hoo boy... (deep breaths) We think if you read closely between the lines, we you might just see

FALLOUT 3

Release: Late 2008

So those maestros who brought you the joy that was Oblivion are back for another round in the exact same genre, offering up a sumptuous feast of post apocalyptic RPG goodness with all the trimmings. Damn.

that sounds finger lickin' good. The choices you make for good or for evil will shape the fallout-ridden world. Man o'man are we hunary for this one!

XXXX

S3 TOP 20

ASSASSIN'S CREED

A landmark in gaming history Nothing short of awe-inspiring. The missions are samey, but navigating open-worlds will neve be the same. The biggest leap since GTAIII.

UNCHARTED: DRAKE'S FORTUNE

The best PlayStation exclusive on the market and the best looking console game to date. Frankly, Uncharted rocks up to the party and just plain owns everything..

CALL OF DUTY 4

Relentlessly exciting. Includes a dizzying variety of combat scenarios and stacks of bleeding-edge military hardware. You'd have to be insane, or a girly-man, to miss it.

ROCK BAND

The best party game ever and a triumph in every department, with a killer set list and rad instruments. You wanted the best: you got the best - Rock Band rocks.

MOTORSTORM

Fast, hard, dirty and utterly exhilarating, MotorStorm is essential for everyone's PS3. Not even the lack of split-screen can detract from this fantastic racer

RESISTANCE: FALL OF MAN

The perfect launch title for PS3, and possibly the best console FPS ever made. The massive 40-player online deathmatches are more fun than you can imagine.

THE ELDER SCROLLS IV: OBLIVION

One of the deepest adventures we've ever laid eyes on. Simply put - awesome. This is arguably the only RPG you'll need for some time to come.

SKATE

A groundbreaking title that resets the bar for sports games in general. It kickflips Tony Hawk's to the curb with its simple approach. Irresistibly addictive and downright essential.

There is no better multiplayer game on PS3 right now. Tighter than a bull's arse on fight night and smoother than a glass of Guinness

overwhelming majority of Burnout Paradise rocks harder than Slash during an epic guitar

HEAVENLY SWORD

Heavenly Sword is one of the best games. we've seen in ages. A beautiful, yet deep, masterpiece and an awesomely enjoyable ride, albeit a rather short one.

GUITAR HERO III

Captures everything perfect about Guitar Hero with the best tracklist vet, but very nearly spoiled it all with the ridiculous new Battle Mode.

COLIN MCRAE DIRT

Colin McRae DIRT is an ambitious. accessible racer with a surprising amount of depth. The best rally sim ever? You better believe it. Rest in peace big guy.

THE DARKNESS

Tentacles and guns - the perfect combination. Stunning, original and gory as hell. You'd have to be dim to miss The

STUNTMAN: IGNITION

The vehicular equivalent of a 10-hour-long orgasm. Gentlemen, start your boners. Stuntman: Ignition succeeds in upending the original in every way.

RATCHET & CLANK FUTURE: TOOLS OF DESTRUCTION

The biggest, wildest, most interesting. varied and downright gool ol' fashioned fun adventure these two have been part of.

THE ORANGE BOX

A stellar package: ripe, in season and packed full of vitamin value. If there isn't one title here that does it for you your gaming license is null and void.

TOM CLANCY'S **RAINBOW SIX VEGAS**

This Vegas adventure is definitely worth a look. A slick, gorgeous, accessible and utterly entertaining tactical shooter.

CONDEMNED 2

Takes everything that's good about an EPS and drags it, kicking and screaming, into a survival horror paradigm. Gripping stuff and well worth the price of admission.

SINGSTAR

SingStar will rule Friday nights for the foreseeable future. Should last as long as the PS3 does providing Sony pulls its finger out with more downloadable tracks.





it's a superior piece of software

BURNOUT PARADISE

Despite the lack of the old Crash Mode, the solo. So fast, so wild.



A far better alternative to Mobile Suit Gundam.

BEOWULE

Has the dubious honour of ticking every game cliché.

BLADESTORM: THE HUNDRED YEARS' WAR

A solid mix of genres wrapped in an intriguing tale

BLAZING ANGELS II: SECRET MISSIONS OF WWII 6

Not quite the ace of aces at this stage.

CALL OF DUTY 3

A solid but surprisingly unspectacular shooter.

CLIVE BARKER'S JERICHO

Sick and twisted but not enough variety.

THE CLUB

Compulsive and fun - one club you should join.

A bulldog of bloodletting, savage adventure and boobies.

DEVIL MAY CRY 4

A worthy entry into the series but the backtracking spoils it.

DEF JAM: ICON

Somehow it's won its way into our hearts. Stupid fun.

THE EYE OF JUDGEMENT

Impressive tech, but it's still a \$160 card game.

A chilling ride but the graphics are a bit of a shocker.

Finally puts FIFA on level terms with Pro Evolution.

FIFA STREET 3

The saviour for your multiplayer soul. Simple but fun.

FIGHT NIGHT ROUND 3

Boasts visuals that will knock the teeth out of you.

FOLKLORE

Great graphics, memorable characters. A sweet surprise.

FULL AUTO 2: BATTLELINES

Brims with potential but fails to live up to it.

GENJI: DAYS OF THE BLADE

Plodding gameplay that belongs on the Atari 2600.

THE GODFATHER: THE DON'S EDITION

Fine, but do yourself a favour and get the PS2 version.

THE GOLDEN COMPASS

Uninspired level design and dull quests make this a chore

HARRY POTTER & THE ORDER OF THE PHOENIX 6

Decent, but its chore-like structure will bore most

JUICED 2: HOT IMPORT NIGHTS

A top bit of racing fluff, although it's all a tad generic.

KANE & LYNCH: DEAD MEN

One part Hitman, one part Michael Mann; mostly a let down

A massive let-down. It feels rushed and unfinished

LOST PLANET: EXTREME CONDITION

Solid enough, but a lazy port and a visual let-down.





TOTO - AFRICA

It has the high pitched chorus bit, and the laid back verses. When we get on the mic on this bad boy, it's pure emotion, man.



LIONEL RITCHIE

- EASY Easy to sing, makes you look good in

front of the ladies, and has that long FFFFAAAAASY bit at the end.



BRITNEY SPEARS

- TOXIC

This may seem like a weird choice from us chaps, but there's something about this song that gets our lungs a pumpin'.



JOHN FARNHAM - YOU'RE THE

No explanation necessary. This song has the best chorus in history. АНАААНАНАНАААА!



RADIOHEAD

The anthem for emos before such a term even existed. In fact, this song is so good/bad it actually invented emos.

MADDEN NEL 08

Some great improvements and plenty of modes.

MARVEL: ULTIMATE ALLIANCE

Great co-op and an exhaustive list of Marvel's greatest.

MEDAL OF HONOR AIRBORNE

A dinosaur of an FPS - wait for Brothers in Arms instead.

MOBILE SUIT GUNDAM: TARGET IN SIGHT 3

A rubber godzilla of a title. What a pipe blocker

MX VS. ATV UNTAMED

Feels like a PS2 port, looks like a PS2 port. Disappointing.

Fails to pick a side (sim or arcade) and so fails at both.

Not as pretty as LIVE but has more depth.

NBA LIVE 08

Best of its kind. B-ball devotees will adore it, guaranteed.

NBA STREET HOMECOURT

The brashest, most addictive arcade basketball game yet.

NEED FOR SPEED CARBON

The last NFS street racer before the series went legit

NEED FOR SPEED PROSTREET

Great smoke, but more depth would've been nice

NINJA GAIDEN SIGMA

A treasure trove of gaming goodness, super tough.

PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN: AT WORLD'S END 6

A very shallow slash 'em up. Ye be warned.

PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 2008

Still the best soccer in the biz, but the graphics are dire.

SEGA RALLY

Not so much a revolution as one hell of a renovation.

SONIC THE HEDGEHOG

Mostly terrible. Avoid at all costs.

STRANGLEHOLD

Max Payne inspired action, plenty of frantic fun.

A solid time-bender that doesn't quite reach 88mph.

TOM CLANCY'S GHOST RECON: AW2

A tense, realistic shooter, but Rainbow Six Vegas is better.

TONY HAWK'S PROVING GROUND

Struggles to escape the shadow of SKATE.

Packs plenty of bite but it's missing a few teeth.

UNREAL TOURNAMENT 3

Gorgeous and gory, but the lack of split-screen blows.

VIRTUA FIGHTER 5

As hardcore as fighting games get.

VIRTUA TENNIS 3

Some of the best fun four people can have on one PS3.

8

WWE SMACKDOWN VS. RAW 2008

A solid entry. A few new additions but still plays the same.

MAGIC MOMENTS

Great moments in PlayStation history remembered!



THE GAME: SSX Tricky

THE CONSOLE: PlayStation 2

THE YEAR: 2001

THE MOMENT: Über tricks. That's right, we said it, and we're not talking about German hookers either. We're talking about über awesome, über spectacular über... err. over-the-top tricks that rocked your world. That's what SSX Tricky brought us. Sure, this wasn't the first bit of boarding (skate or snow) that captured our interest, we'd been kick-flipping to the Tony Hawk franchise and carving up the slopes in the pure gold that was Cool Boarders for ages, but SSX Tricky was a different manner of beast. A clichéd ensemble of characters grabbing massive air, crashing through buildings, taking crazy shortcuts and riding ridiculous rails, this diamond in the rough had it all. It was part Tony Hawk, part Burnout and certified cool. Just when you thought it couldn't get better... über tricks sweetened the deal.

Not only did you have to win three heats to complete each race, but the style and flair you sported on the slopes could be used for a quick boost OR you could build it up and perform an uber trick. Grab enough air, flick a shoulder button, hit square and watch the show. Boarders flipped, spun, cart wheeled in mid-air, passed the board through their legs in a series of outrageously over the top manoeuvres that kicked your boost up a notch and sent the crowd into a frenzy. Oh, and it got better. Chain five together during a race and you could perform a 'super' trick (and again, no, it's not a prostitute with super powers), which made the outlandish uber moves seem meek in comparison, and it gave you unlimited boost for the duration of the race. The first time we nailed one of those, and boosted all the way to the finish line for the win was hard to forget.

Often imitated, no boarding or skating game has come close to matching the colour, youthful exuberance and straight out fun of SSX Tricky. Über tricks, über tracks, über characters... über cool.

iac's other famous franchise (Ratchet & Clank) also us

Taking a look back at the best in the business.

RETROSPECTIVE

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MATTER CONTRACTOR

ومن المن المن

THINKING OUTSIDE THE CARDBOARD BOX

Looking back at Metal Gear Solid...

hether you love it to death, like the majority of humankind, or hate it secretly, in your underground cave with a band of tasteless. mouth-breathing, morlock outcasts - no serious gamer can deny that Metal Gear Solid on the PlayStation was a bold proponent of gameplay innovation. Before MGS's release in 1998 most third-person action games of the era were mindless collect-a-thons, fetch-me-that-fests, or blast-o-ramas filled with swarms of semi-retarded automatons who detected you and then attacked relentlessly until you shotgunned them. Sweeping generalisations aside, not many game designers on PSX really dared to offer up any interesting ideas that defied the usual swarm-warfare and ho-hum linearity. But Konami's Hideo 'Big Boss' Kojima had some ideas - a big-arsed cardboard box full of them in fact.

USE STEALTH, SAVE HEALTH

Life in 1998 was very different to today; there were at least two B*Witched singles in the top ten music charts at any one time, and not shooting everybody in a videogame was an utterly alien concept – so much so that the marketing team

for MGS had to slap on the 'zing-worthy' subheading "Tactical Espionage Action". That's right, back before the days of Splinter Cell and Assassin's Creed folks never really thought about the benefits gained from waiting, watching, and using their noggin to defeat a superior military force. Not only did MGS help solidify this new idea into popular gaming culture, but it also achieved the impossible task of making nondescript cardboard boxes cool, and it helped train a bold new generation of security conscious thieves and peeping toms. Good times...

PIRATE RORTING PUZZLES

Any game that can challenge your intelligence in a new way is an exceptional experience. For example, at some point in MGS you make the acquaintance of Meryl, a comrade who must be contacted via a dedicated Codec channel. It sounds easy enough; apparently you can easily find her codec number on the 'case'. After ten minutes of inventory checking, and another ten minutes of gawking at the TV like your dog does when he hears the barking from the MeatyBites commercials – the shrewd among us thought outside of

I see I'm relieved to hear that. Already tested, huh? By the way, how's the diversionary operation going?

the grey PS box and checked the back of the game's packaging to solve the nefarious riddle. Pirates got shafted, amusingly.

ATTACK OF THE PREYING MANTIS

Similar strokes of unconventional genius could be sampled during the boss fight with Psycho Mantis. Being a (psycho) psychic Herr Mantis would 'read your mind' by viewing logged statistics of your deaths and saving habits, plus he'd access your memory card and mentioned any Konami games that had saves present. Not content with this, the psychic showman would then defy the laws of physics by being the first video game character in the history of the world to make a real life object move - your controller placed on the floor with an overload of dualshock vibration. If you tried something like that today, there would probably be lawsuits - stupid, lawsuits

WE WANT IT NOW - NO, NOW

As it is with any form of beautiful art, MGS is all about the aforementioned smaller brush strokes. When you intermix these examples with the obviously amazing voice actors who embroil you in an ever deepening plot, with a truly inspired musical score, and some of the most memorable think-on-your-feet decisions and boss encounters in the history of videogames – it's clear to see that while the seed of innovation was planted by the original Metal Gear on the MSX2, it really started to bloom in a big way on the PlayStation platform.

And we think that even the *Metal*Gear Solid-hating morlocks are curious to see what unfolds in the newest and fully bloomed *Metal* Gear experience. Roll on number four...

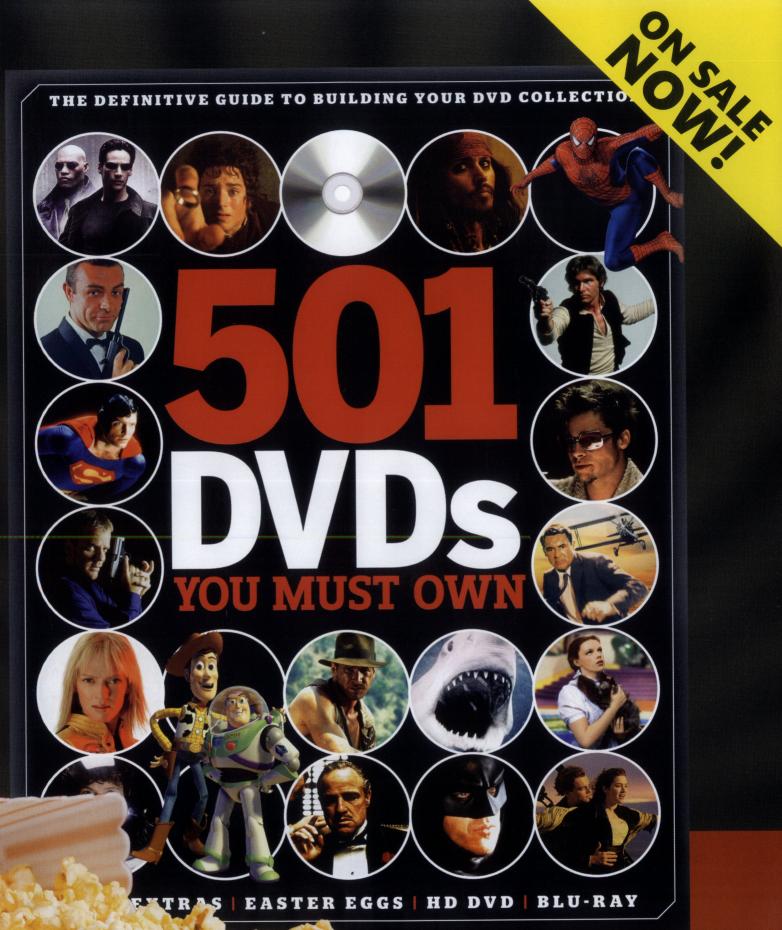




THE PLAYA HAYTER

Solid Snake is voiced by David Hayter, a multi-talented voice actor who also voiced Captain America in a 1994 Spiderman cartoon series, plus he wrote the screenplay for the the first X-Men movie.

Word on the street is he also made a cameo appearance in the ill-fated sitcom *Major Dad*, but we won't hold that against him...





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